DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 446 888 RC 022 676

AUTHOR	Sabourin, Beverly; Globensky, Peter Andre
TITLE	The Language of Literacy: A National Resource Directory of Aboriginal Literacy Programs.
SPONS AGENCY	National Literacy Secretariat, Ottawa (Ontario).
PUB DATE	1998-12-00
NOTE	285p.; Sponsored by Step by Step Learning Centre, Kahnawake First Nation, Canada.
AVAILABLE FROM	Beverly Anne Sabourin and Associates, 66 Cuthbertson Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3P 0N8, Canada; Tel: 204-885-0660 (free). Full text at the National Adult Literacy Database Web site: http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/langlit/cover.htm.
PUB TYPE	Reference Materials - Directories/Catalogs (132) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC12 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adult Basic Education; Adult Literacy; *American Indian Education; *Canada Natives; Culturally Relevant Education; Foreign Countries; Functional Literacy; *High School Equivalency Programs; *Literacy Education; Program Descriptions
IDENTIFIERS	*Canada

ABSTRACT

This directory presents, in narrative form, core information about the operations of approximately 100 Aboriginal literacy programs throughout Canada. To qualify for inclusion in the directory, each program had to offer basic, functional, or advanced literacy training; offer literacy training in English, French, or an Aboriginal language; be "Aboriginal controlled"; and attract learners who are "return students." The program profiles are arranged by province and include contact information, host organization, communities served, program mission and objectives, program features, and unusual features or concerns. Some Quebec program descriptions are presented in French. Programs are hosted primarily by First Nation Band Councils and Aboriginal community centers. The programs in the directory have met and overcome a number of challenges: the isolation and onerous responsibilities of literacy practitioners, inadequate financial resources, the need to provide a safe and welcoming environment, the need to develop a curriculum that is both culturally relevant and relevant to adults' lives, transportation and daycare obstacles, learners' personal problems that decrease motivation, and inadequate access to technology and technical assistance. Successful programs share several critical features: a safe and welcoming environment, supportive community leadership, competent program staff, community support resources, adequate human and financial resources, relevant personalized programming, and appropriate curriculum. Information is presented on funding and support available from the National Literacy Secretariat, and an agenda for a national Aboriginal literacy conference is suggested. (Contains the interview protocol.) (SV)

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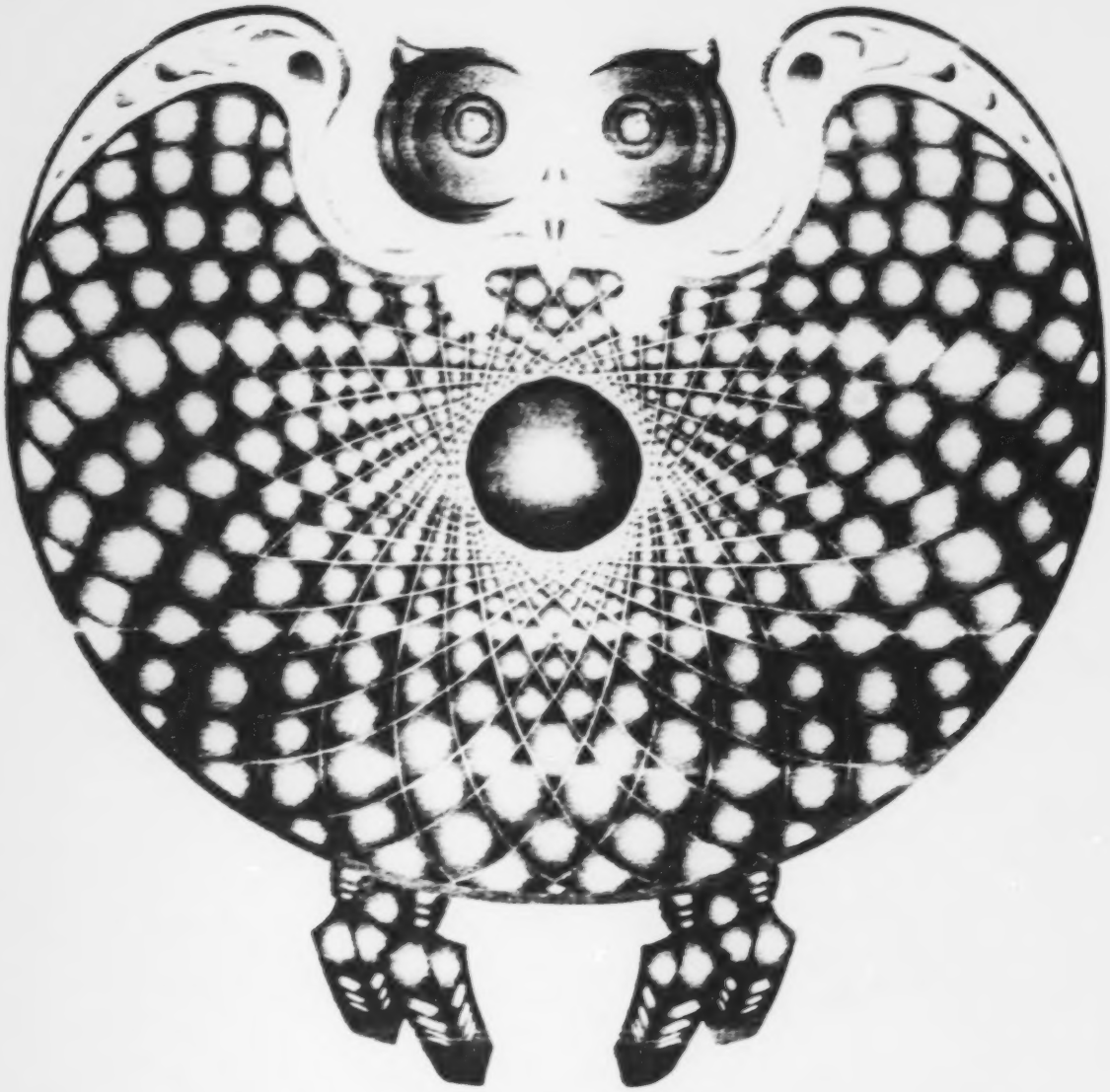

THE LANGUAGE OF LITERACY

A National Resource Directory of Aboriginal Literacy Programs

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RC 022676

Beverly Anne Sabourin & Associates
Winnipeg, Manitoba

&

Step by Step Learning Centre
Kahnawake First Nation, Canada

The Language of Literacy

A National Resource Directory of Aboriginal Literacy Programs

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Kahnawake First Nation
Canada

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♦♦♦

"Education is a fundamental part of our community regardless of age."

♦♦♦

Dedication

The Language of Literacy:

A National Resource Directory of Aboriginal Literacy Programs

is dedicated to the practitioners and coordinators involved in aboriginal literacy in Canada. Their commitment and dedication to this endeavour, exemplified by their selfless and tireless work, continue to provide a well-spring of hope and empowerment to thousands of aboriginal people in Canada.

The publication of ***The Language of Literacy*** in December, 1998 also coincides with the 50th Anniversary of the signing of United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 26 of the Declaration states:

Everyone has a right to education. . . . Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. . . . This resource directory is dedicated, as well, to Article 26 of the UN Universal Declaration, and its full and unrestricted implementation in Canada and abroad.

First Edition: December, 1998

Researched & Published by:
Beverly Anne Sabourin and Associates

Sponsored by:
Step by Step Early Learning Centre
Kahnawake First Nation, Canada

With generous support from:
The National Literacy Secretariat
Human Resources Development Canada

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As with any endeavour of this magnitude, numerous people have been involved and must be thanked for their contributions to this initiative. First and foremost, sincere appreciation is extended to the Aboriginal literacy program coordinators and practitioners who participated in the research. They gave generously of one of their most valuable commodities – their time. Their passion for their work made us conscious of the fact that time with us was time away from the learners and students who have been their primary professional preoccupation.

A debt of gratitude is also owed to Yeshu Naidoo, executive-director of the Step by Step Early Learning Centre in the First Nations community of Kahnawake who shared her ideas in the early development of the project and provided confident and competent support in sponsorship during the duration of the project. The administrative support of her staff was also key to the smooth running of the project.

The compilation of information and analysis evident in The Language of Literacy would not have been possible without significant contributions from three professional consultants. To Priscilla George of Toronto whose commitment to the issue of literacy and empowerment, and profound insights into education and the whole person, a warm thank you for the development of Chapters Four and Five and for adding to the bank of program information. Loretta Belanger of Edmonton and Virginia Thomas of Montreal also contributed their professional competence, skills and patience in the development of the program profiles and are owed and given our gratitude for their important involvement.

A number of other professionals contributed to the preparation of this Resource Directory in editing and compiling information, providing feedback and critical analysis and constant encouragement. To Skip Brooks of Ottawa, Susan Mundy of Orleans, and Jack Sterken of London, Jim Turner of Pixel Graphics, Gilles Marchildon, Wendy Reger, Heather Geddie and Susan Nagasaka of Winnipeg, our appreciation for your important contributions.

Finally, a vote of heartfelt thanks to Jim MacLaren of the National Literacy Secretariat who provided encouragement and unfailing support to this initiative and remains fully committed to ensuring that Aboriginal peoples have equal access to literacy resources in Canada.

Thanks to all, Chi - Meegwetch,

Beverly Anne Sabourin
President
BASA

Peter André Globensky
Principal Consultant
BASA

The Incredible Power of Literacy

A Message From Tomson Highway. . .

Throughout the 60's and 70's, when I was in school, I remember virtually all our reading and educational materials had to do with England or the U.S. or, at the very least, southern and most definitely – non-Native Canada. Nothing ever happened in our part of the world – in my case, northern, Native Manitoba. Dick and Jane, the Happy Hollisters, the Hardy Boys, Oliver Twist, Jane Eyre, Romeo and Juliet, THEY had all the fun, the adventures, the dramas, the great love affairs, not us.

Needless to say, precious few of us Native kids could relate to these people, these characters. So of what interest was school to us? Is it any wonder most Native students dropped out before finishing highschool? Is it any wonder so few went on to university? Is it any wonder so few went on to successful careers in business, in law, in the social sciences, in the arts?

Fortunately, sometime in the late 70's and 80's, a few hardy souls in the Native community started writing – stories that took place on reserves for instance, or at least were about Native individuals having fun, adventures, engaging in dramatic encounters, carrying on great love affairs. What's more, many of these books – plays, novels, poetry – eventually found their way into school (and university) curricula, not to mention libraries and bookstores. Now, Native students could read about themselves, their lives, their problems, their fears, dreams, aspirations. And, now, they were interested. Now, there was a reason for finishing highschool, for going on to university and successful careers that, in turn, added immeasurably to the rebuilding and revitalizing of many broken and troubled Native communities. Suddenly, we were helping ourselves, changing our lives for the better.

This exciting new journey has only just begun. . .

This exciting new journey has only just begun, however. And the road still to be travelled is long and winding. All the more reason, therefore, for reading and learning and reading and learning. Who knows, you too may soon be writing stories, novels, plays, or poems, all of which, in their turn, will add immeasurably to the Native education system and, in the end, to the increasing health of Native communities everywhere.

Yes. Indeed. Literacy can change the world. Go for it!

Tomson Highway
Toronto, Ontario
November 10, 1998.

"Developing self-esteem among students
is a crucial component of
the programme's objectives."

1997/98 Personal Experience of Kevin McNab in the Anishnawbe Skills Development Program

A Message From a Literacy Program Graduate. . .

My name is Kevin McNab and I am a Saulteau person from Gordon First Nation in Saskatchewan. For the past year and a half, I've been honoured to attend the Anishnawbe Skills Development Program at the Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre. This program has allowed me to achieve my Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

The program itself not only focussed on academic learning, but it also enabled me to attend other functions at the Friendship Centre such as Sharing Circles and workshops. It also introduced me to Micro Computers which is a necessity in University for papers and assignments. This was a very positive process and it not only helped me academically, but it also helped me to understand myself better as well as the people around me.

I can accomplish anything, if I keep trying!

I have to admit that the idea of going back to school was pretty scary, but I soon learned that you only get out of the program, what you put into it. I would like to thank the staff at the Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre for the friendly environment in which the program was offered. I would like to thank Sharon Bannon, Literacy Coordinator and Connie Bannon, Assistant Literacy Coordinator for helping me to realize that I can accomplish anything, if I keep trying. Through this realization, I have found self-esteem as well as understanding that it's never too late to learn something new. I am also grateful that such a positive program is offered for Native people in Thunder Bay.

Chi Meegwetch

Kevin McNab
Thunder Bay, Ontario
November 1998

♦♦♦

"The ability of any of us to learn is shaped by the environment we live in."

♦♦♦

The Language of Literacy

A National Resource Directory of Aboriginal Literacy Programs.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

The *Language of Literacy*: A National Resource Directory of Aboriginal Literacy Programs is the first directory of its kind in Canada. It attempts to gather, in narrative form, critical-core information about the operations of Aboriginal literacy programs throughout Canada – from east to west to north. It is a comprehensive, representative sample of Aboriginal literacy initiatives operating in both urban, rural and remote regions of the country. Under the direction of a group of passionately committed, resource-strapped, often isolated and always busy literacy coordinators and practitioners, these Aboriginal literacy programs offer learners and students opportunities to reacquaint themselves with the challenges of learning. These programs are almost always learner-centred, operating in a welcoming and nurturing environment that moves at the pace of the learner, recognizes the integrity of the whole person, and attempts to remove the negative baggage and experience of previous institutional education experiences.

An opportunity to share information and learn...

This resource directory is meant to serve as a thread of contact among these "diamonds in the rough", serving, it is hoped, as a point of convergence, as an opportunity to share information and learn from the vast depth of experiences which comprise the important arena of adult learning within Aboriginal communities.

Noting the absence of any material at the national level describing the status and health of Aboriginal literacy programming, the Step by Step Early Learning Centre, an early childhood education program situated in the First Nations community of Kahnawake and Beverly Anne Sabourin and Associates, a Winnipeg-based First Nations consultancy specializing in advocacy, received financial assistance and support from the National Literacy Secretariat to undertake a national initiative on the current status of Aboriginal literacy programming in Canada. The intent was to create an inventory of Aboriginal literacy programs that would serve as a comprehensive database of program information and become a resource for program practitioners and others working in the field of Aboriginal literacy.

Additionally, with the wealth of information collected from practitioners and coordinators of Aboriginal literacy programs located in every jurisdiction in the country, opportunities became available to extract and compare information across all program initiatives. In addition to providing key information about the operations of approximately 100 literacy initiatives (Chapter Three), we are able to identify and present practitioners and others labouring in the field of literacy with critical information about challenges and opportunities affecting most programs (Chapter Four) and go on to identify and

suggest the key or critical components essential to the overall, long-term success of Aboriginal literacy programming (Chapter Five).

To further stimulate the creativity and commitment-to-cause so visibly com-municated by practitioners during our interviews, the resource directory also includes an annotated collection of Aboriginal literacy initiatives (Chapter Six) recently funded by the National Literacy Secretariat housed within the federal department of Human Resources Development Canada. Practitioners and coordinators are invited to mine this resource-rich field for both ideas and the funds required to implement them! Finally, we offer concluding observations and ideas (Chapter Seven) generated by countless hours of discussion and interviews with program coordinators and practitioners including a detailed proposal which has emerged to gather together the front-line professionals who labour long and hard in this field.

All of us involved in this initiative have been both moved and impressed with the dedication and commitment that practitioners have brought to their Aboriginal literacy program initiatives. Many have toiled above and beyond the call of duty working to serve the needs and aspirations of learners – and they have done so in circumstances that have been challenging and difficult. We sincerely hope that The Language of Literacy: A National Resource Directory of Aboriginal Literacy will provide additional threads in what may become a strong strand of linkages and networks among Aboriginal literacy practitioners and coordinators and their colleagues across the country.

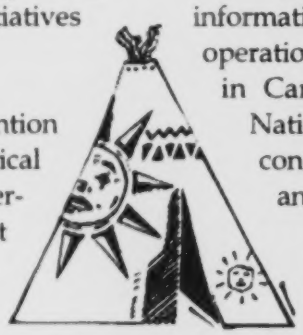
In concluding our investigative trek among the scores of Aboriginal literacy programs across the country, we were impressed, time and again, by the "splendid solitude" within which practitioners walk the path of learning with their students. These initiatives are indeed like snowflakes on a winter window – all different each from the other with distinctive characteristics. We hope that in some small way this resource directory will serve as connective lacing among these precious, sometimes delicate jewels of learning opportunity.

Winter frozen waves of white
ancient barns and deserted farmhouses,
a sometimes desperate, dis-spirit landscape.
Trudge through the drifts, ancestral snows
to the warmth of the shining lights, drawn.
Snowflakes on winter windows
Each different, each a splendid solitude,
each their own, all offering, no, more...
all enticing a glimpse of what lies alive within.

Chapter Two

A FEW WORDS ON DESIGN AND METHODS. . . .

From the beginning of this initiative, the Step by Step Early Learning Centre and Beverly Anne Sabourin and Associates wished, in ***The Language of Literacy***, to produce a national resource directory on Aboriginal literacy programs in Canada that was accessible, 'user-friendly', representative and comprehensive. Coupled with our intentions of making the information available on the Internet, it is hoped this live resource will service the needs of literacy practitioners who want a better understanding of the status of Aboriginal literacy initiatives in Canada.



Equally important, it is our intention to produce narrative and analytical information that will inform federal and provincial government departments so that their policies will better reflect the real aspirations and needs of the Aboriginal literacy community in Canada. The over-arching or guiding principle supporting our work was the commitment to contact Aboriginal literacy programs directly and meet face-to-face with the coordinators and practitioners who fuel the Aboriginal literacy movement in Canada.

The issue of representability is another fundamental principle guiding our work. As we began to work and cultivate the fields of information, it became clear that we would produce a comprehensive and representative directory of Aboriginal literacy and adult basic education programs in Canada. Because of the numerous program offerings, both through community-based initiatives, where we focussed much of our energy, and more traditional institutional offerings where such programs were housed within community colleges or educational institutions, we could only hope that the Directory would be both inclusive and representative, if not exhaustive.

Preliminary research was conducted by the core consultants and work began in earnest in late 1997. In these initial stages work focussed on accumulating as much resource information as possible pertaining to the operation of Aboriginal literacy programs in Canada. Extensive searches of the National Adult Literacy Data Base were conducted. References to individuals and experts in the field were followed up with meetings and discussions in order to acquire a more focussed view of the terrain and the limits of our research horizon. Full advantage was also taken of the information and data contained in the resource libraries of "mainstream" literacy organizations such as Alpha Ontario and the Movement for Canadian Literacy among others.

These efforts proved to be far more challenging then first anticipated. As we said in our preliminary report to project sponsors, the Step by Step Early Learning Centre:

"While there is considerable information respecting the development and availability of Aboriginal curriculum and resource materials, in most jurisdictions, the identification of functional Aboriginal literacy programs proved

to be a far more arduous task requiring extensive research, cross-referencing and information-mining. We quickly concluded, with not a little apprehension, that there was very little information extant about the operations of Aboriginal literacy programs in Canada. Hence, these initial mining operations were far more extensive then anticipated! Significantly more time was required to ferret out what programs were in operation and where they were located."

Locating direct, applicable information on the number and location of functioning Aboriginal literacy programs in Canada was more challenging than first anticipated, most often because of the simple absence of such documented information.

At times the lack of familiarity among government education/training officials or mainstream literacy workers with the status of Aboriginal literacy in their region slowed our progress. In one instance, a para-government official with responsibility for the very modest resources provided to literacy initiatives in her province simply refused to divulge any information about Aboriginal literacy initiatives under her 'care'! Fortunately, such misplaced colonialism was exceedingly rare, as almost all stakeholders welcomed our initiative and, if not knowledgeable in the area, referred us to those who could assist.

Challenges facing the Aboriginal community

Establishing contact with 'secondary stakeholders', experts and professionals working in the field of Aboriginal literacy or those connected to Aboriginal organizations who shared a responsibility for Aboriginal education proved to be the most viable approach to identifying Aboriginal literacy programs across Canada. Generally, these stakeholders were found in "mainstream" literacy organizations, federal, provincial and territorial government departments, post-secondary educational institutions, national and regional-provincial Aboriginal representative organizations.

The development of these contacts was undertaken in parallel with the development of the research methodology. Over the initial period of this initiative contacts were made or identified in all federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions in Canada. Also contacted were all of the Aboriginal representative organizations and numerous mainstream literacy organizations. The purpose in doing so was to cross-reference and isolate all Aboriginal literacy programs functioning at the community level. This growing bank of contacts contributed to a bank of primary stakeholders defined as those coordinators or practitioners, teachers or administrators that shared or occupied a primary responsibility for the delivery of these community-based programs.

Parallel to the development of a research base, the methods we would deploy to secure our information from coordinators and practitioners were further defined and refined. The methodology grew out of progressive clarifications of the objectives to be reached in data collection and the nature of the information that we wished to include in the national resource of Aboriginal literacy programs. Essentially, we want the resource directory to both inform and generate ideas based on the rich experience inherent in the movement.

As such, the core of the directory would provide straight-forward, program information focussed on the major components of each program - a who-what-where-when and why of the program under scrutiny.

Because so much information would be generated with this approach, we also decided to provide analytical treatment and observations on common themes and program components, the absence or presence of which would significantly impact program performance.

Volunteers are diamonds in the rough!

The primary method used for direct data collection were field visits to interview program practitioners/coordinators. When time and resources suggested a more efficient deployment, telephone interviews were used. In securing and providing information on nearly one hundred Aboriginal literacy programs in Canada, we are now convinced that direct, face-to-face interviews with the coordinators and practitioners working in their own milieu produced the quality that may be apparent in these pages. Although telephone interviews were used as a secondary strategy, nothing - and certainly not mailed-questionnaires - could replace the dimensionality and practical exposure to program operations provided by direct interviews with the practitioners themselves. We speak on behalf of all consultants involved in the preparation of this Directory in extending our sincere appreciation to the program coordinators who patiently responded to our time-consuming questions!

The primary research instrument was an interview schedule or questionnaire, the first such document being some 65 questions in length! Numerous consultations and further refinements resulted in a substantial reduction in the number of questions administered.

It was also decided that the identical questionnaire would be used in those instances where telephone interviews were deemed more efficient and a detailed protocol was established for the deployment and use of the questionnaire in such situations. The questionnaire was then field-tested in both direct and telephone interviews resulting in an instrument with 31 questions.

Six consultants, all Aboriginal or with extensive professional experience working with Aboriginal communities undertook the data collection component of the initiative.

As the Introduction suggests, Aboriginal literacy programs are very much like snowflakes on a distant winter window: It takes considerable time to slog through the snow and get to the appropriate windows. Once there, one quickly observes that each of the snowflakes form their own distinct pattern with notable, individual characteristics. In rare instances, however, is there any connective lacing among the snowflakes. Another metaphor in an earlier report outlining progress on the initiative suggested:

"Aboriginal literacy programs and their coordinators and volunteers are diamonds in the rough, labouring long and hard, too often in isolation and without the support of peers and like-minded advocates."

Outside of their operating milieu, they are not well known. In many instances,

finding these diamonds has taken a lot more digging then originally anticipated penetrating through many more layers of secondary stakeholders then was originally thought necessary or possible!

Critical to the use of the information contained in ***The Language of Literacy:*** *A National Resource Directory of Aboriginal Literacy Programs* is an understanding of the definition given to Aboriginal literacy. We replicate it here as it defined the boundaries of the study, provided a filter for the appropriate identification of primary stakeholders and guided our field work.

Basic Literacy assumes the learner has had little formal education, experiences serious difficulty in exercising basic and essential reading, writing and numeracy skills and functions at an approximate Grade 2 - 4 level in a formal educational environment. Functional Literacy assumes the learner has had some formal education, usually to the Grade 9 level and functions with but basic adequacy in exercising reading, writing and numeracy tasks essential to his survival or livelihood. Advanced Literacy defines those learners that are most often involved in "educational upgrading" courses where they are attempting to acquire the reading, writing and numeracy skills usually equated with students in senior high-school grades.

We also had to provide a rigorous test for defining exactly what is meant by an Aboriginal literacy program. In almost all cases herein reported, this definition is adhered to. It is understood that in order to qualify for inclusion in the resource directory, the program must meet all of the following conditions:

- Either in its entirety or as a component of it, the program offers basic and/or functional and/or advanced literacy training. It may offer any number of additional programs (job readiness training, life skills, vocational training, etc., but it must offer basic and/or functional and/or advanced literacy training to qualify for inclusion in the inventory.

- The program offers literacy training in either of the two official languages and/or in an Aboriginal language. However, for an Aboriginal language program to qualify as an Aboriginal literacy program, the majority of learners must be generally illiterate in either official language.

- The program is "Aboriginal controlled", broadly defined as a program whose direction is subject to governance and/or policy procedures of an Aboriginal Board or institution whose primary purpose is to serve the Aboriginal community.

- The program attracts learners who are "return students," defined as those students who have left or quit formal educational training and have returned to a program for literacy or "upgrading" training.

As suggested above, in gathering information for ***The Language of Literacy:*** **A**

National Resource Directory of Aboriginal Literacy Programs in Canada, particular attention has been paid to the issues of inclusion, comprehensiveness and representivity. This resource directory on Aboriginal literacy has never laid claim to exhaustiveness, yet our research indicates that it is comprehensive and, therefore, representative of the status of Aboriginal literacy programming at play in Canada today.

And now a few words to our Francophone friends in Quebec. Resources for this Directory are such that undertaking a complete translation into French of the content of the Directory has not been possible. However, a number of the program profile interviews were conducted in french and we wanted to provide that information to program coordinators in Quebec in their mother tongue. Although few in number, they will indicate that Aboriginal literacy programming in Quebec is vibrant and alive. To assist Aboriginal literacy coordinators in the rest of Canada to better understand the nature of programming in Quebec, these same profiles have been translated into English.

Et maintenant, quelques mots à nos amis francophones au Québec. Les ressources pour ce répertoire sont telles qu'il n'est pas possible d'entreprendre la traduction française complète du contenu du répertoire. Cependant, quelques entrevues du profil du programme ont été effectuées en français, et nous voulions fournir cette information aux coordonnateurs de programmes du Québec dans leur langue maternelle. Même s'ils sont peu nombreux, ils indiqueront que les programmes d'alphabétisation autochtone au Québec sont actifs et vivants. Afin d'aider les coordonnateurs en alphabétisation autochtone à travers le reste du Canada à mieux comprendre la nature des programmes au Québec, ces mêmes profils ont été traduits en anglais.

We trust that the program profiles which now follow will reflect both the variety of Aboriginal literacy programming experience in Canada and the commitment of those who labour long and hard and under difficult circumstances in producing some of the best "value-for-money" educational initiatives in Canada.

Chapter Three

THE PROGRAM PROFILES

The nearly 100 Aboriginal literacy programs which grace the following pages are organized and presented according to a standard template of information. Programs are listed alphabetically by provincial or territorial jurisdiction. Each program profile provides information about program demographics, contact resources and coordinates. The program mission and objectives are then reviewed, followed by the program's most salient features. Final observations on program operations are then presented and round out each profile.

Program profile provides information about demographics

Every attempt has been made to ensure accuracy, particularly with respect to program coordinates. All original drafts of the profiles were returned to program coordinators for comment and corrections. We hope the final versions of the profiles honour their wishes and suggested changes. It should be noted that, in some instances, program coordinators or practitioners may have changed, but the contact numbers for the programs remain current. Despite a strong desire to do so, we were not able to allocate resources for a full translation of the Resource Directory. To honour the work of our colleagues in Québec, we have published the appropriate program profiles from that jurisdiction in French and include English translations for those in the rest of Canada who may wish to establish contact with Québec-based Aboriginal literacy programs.

The profiles are the mainstay of the ***Language of Literacy***. We hope they invite interest, ideas, and provide useful, stimulating information about the status of Aboriginal literacy in Canada today. Most of all, we hope that the profiles excite and entice! Excite an interest among readers so that they are enticed to contact their colleagues and build bridges of sharing and hope. This, above all, will strengthen the future of the movement within Aboriginal communities in Canada.

Adult Education Program
Bartlett's Harbour Indian Band Council
PO Box 2A7
Castors River, Newfoundland
A0K 1W0
Tel: (709) 847-4139

Resource Contact: Chief Bill Myers

Host Organization: Bartlett's Harbour Indian Band Council

Communities Served: Aboriginal communities of Bartlett's Harbour, Shoals Cove, Castors River North

Program Mission & Objectives:

Following the standard provincial curriculum of language arts, mathematics and science, the Adult Basic Education program at Bartlett's Harbour is a 60-week project that provides learners with the means to complete their GEDs. As such, it can be considered a relatively advanced-level program, intended for students who already possess fundamental literacy skills.

The program is sponsored by Bartlett's Harbour Indian Band Council, which is also responsible for hiring the full-time professional teacher from Corner Brook. The instructor is responsible for administering the CAAT intake assessment test on all learners, as well as for covering the provincial GED curriculum.

Program Features:

- Staff for the program consists of one full-time teacher and one part-time coordinator. The coordinator functions as both administrator and tutor, and assists with counselling when necessary.

- Currently, there are ten students in the program. All are women ranging in age between 24 and 34 years. All are expected to receive their GEDs upon completion of the program in September 1998.

- The 60-week program is offered continuously, throughout the year, though with only one cycle of learners at a time. The Centre in which it operates is open year-round with a typical 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. schedule, although summer hours are abbreviated.

- The program is accredited with the provincial department of education. Graduates receive their GEDs and may proceed to college-level study.

- Funding for the literacy project comes from the Mi'kmaq Resources Development Corporation. Furthermore, arrangements have been made to permit students to receive EI or social assistance without penalization while enrolled in the program.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Students like the program for a number of reasons, not least of which is the fact that it is offered within the community – indeed, the Band Council designated one of its buildings for the use of the program. Thus, students can attend school in the safe, familiar environment of their own community.

As Chief Myers observes, students are motivated by the simple fact that "the course is offered here in the community... And they really want to better themselves, so that if and when they leave home, they'll be able to find a specific job that interests them – not just any unskilled work that they can get."

Financial obstacles for the learners are reduced through special EI and social assistance arrangements. In addition the MRD offers further subsidies to supplement the learner's income while in the program. The intention is to ensure that the students can complete their studies without the added stress of juggling school, families and jobs.

The program is one of a number of Adult Basic Education programs offered in Aboriginal communities under the joint auspices of the local Chief and Band Council, the Federation of Newfoundland Indians and the Mi'kmaq Resources Development Corporation (MRD). ABE programs are currently offered to adult learners in the Aboriginal communities of Flat Bay, Bartlett's Harbour and Corner Brook.

In addition to program subsidies, the MRD has provided financial assistance in the past to enable the program organizers to engage a coordinator to do outreach and publicity, administration of the program, liaison and coordination, some tutoring and counselling of students, if and when appropriate. There is currently some consideration being given by the MRD to the possibility of terminating the coordinator's function in each of the current programs and negotiating directly with local secondary or post-secondary institutions in these communities to purchase seats in existing programs. If such a program approach is adopted, it is unlikely, for the purposes of this directory, that the program will be categorized as an Aboriginal ABE program as this directory defines them.

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Resource Contact: Ms. Edwina Wetzel, Director of Education

Host Organization: Conne River Band Council

Communities Served: Exclusively adult members of the Conne River Band (pop. 850)

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Conne River Adult Basic Education program began in 1986, shortly after the people of Conne River were recognized as status Indians, and granted their entitlements. Its purpose is to provide an opportunity for adults who did not complete their primary and secondary education, to do so. The program emphasizes its commitment to learning through its full integration into the education system of the school and into the community itself. Its success is largely due to the community, and the value placed upon education for all its members.

Ms. Wetzel explains the philosophy of the Conne River community. "Education is a fundamental part of our community. You do not have a little group of adults over here learning language and a little group over there learning life skills. All students, regardless of age, are fully integrated into our education programs so that it becomes just as natural for an adult to continue her education as it is for a child to start his!"

The Director of Education, in consultation with the Chief and Council, oversees the planning and administration of the program. The Conne River Band Council fully and solely supports the program. In fact, so successfully has it been managed that there are more than adequate funds available to meet the needs of the adult learner.

Program Features:

- The Adult Basic Education program is amply staffed at Conne River. The full-time day staff of St. Anne's School also offers the basic and intermediate literacy courses offered in the evening to adult learners.

- The majority of the 11 learners are women, mostly in their early thirties. Three participants will graduate this year and obtain their GEDs.

- Methodology comprises small, informal classroom setting coupled with one-on-one tutoring where a student is experiencing difficulty. Placement is determined through the standard CAAT test.

- The core provincial curriculum (language arts, communication, math and science) is enhanced by a comprehensive selection of Aboriginal materials. Elementary Mi'kmaq is offered to interested students, and in senior years, the language arts component integrates literature by Aboriginal authors. Furthermore, the program also credits adults for formal and informal (life experience) learning.

- The adult basic literacy program is offered throughout the school year, three nights per week. The school itself operates during the day for children and youth in the standard program, and is taken over in the evening by the adult programs.

- The program offers provincial accreditation upon completion of the GED. Students often continue on to college and university studies.

- Affiliations are maintained with both the provincial and regional literacy councils. Ms. Wetzel welcomes the idea of a national gathering for the same purpose.

- As stated, funding for the program is derived solely – and amply – from the Conne River Band Council. Its resources have been successfully managed, thereby ensuring the permanence of the program.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Students at Conne River, particularly women, are motivated to improve their education by a number of factors; a desire to assist their children with their school studies, to improve their own economic prospects. But perhaps strongest of these is the desire to create for themselves a sense of independence which ultimately empowers these women.

The program at Conne River is faced with few, if any, challenges. Its funding more than amply provides for transportation, day care, and programming. It may perhaps face the prospect of becoming "a victim of its own success" since there are fewer adults in need of basic literacy instruction. As Ms. Wetzel remarks, "We are getting fewer and fewer ABE students, and more students interested in taking both college and university courses!"

Corner Brook Indian Band Council
8 Vine Place
Corner Brook, Newfoundland
A2H 5V8
Tel: (709) 634-8386
(709) 637-2162 – Coordinator

Resource Contact: Chief Marie Newman
Lynn White, Coordinator

Host Organization: Corner Brook Indian Band Council

Communities Served: Corner Brook & Benoit's Cove Indian Bands

Program Mission & Objectives:

The main purpose of the Corner Brook literacy program is to encourage the Aboriginal members of the community to complete their high-school equivalency, and to acquire the literacy skills needed to upgrade their job prospects. It is a ten-month program that uses the various social support systems to the participants' advantage. By negotiated agreement with federal agencies, learners may continue to collect EI benefits and social assistance while participating in the program. All applicants are assessed by the project coordinator; due to limited resources, a minimum of Grade 8 is required for admission.

In spite of pending structural changes to the program, the Corner Brook Indian Band Council is and will remain its governing body. It, along with the Indian Band Council of Benoit's Cove, is affiliated with the Federation of Newfoundland Indians.

Program Features:

- At the moment, 15 students are enrolled in the program. All are Aboriginal, and slightly more than half are women. Participants range in age from early twenties to mid-fifties.

- The curriculum is modified slightly from the conventional provincial guidelines. While students will follow the standard core of subjects (language arts, math, science), they are encouraged to work at their own pace with the assistance of an in-class monitor-teacher. To this end, students are supplied with a lesson plan, course outline and materials. With these, they work in tandem with their monitor. The focus here is clearly on the basics, with little Aboriginal content in the material covered. However, the support and input of the program coordinator often atones for this lack of content.

- The ten-month program follows the usual academic year, operating from September to June, and the daily schedule is fairly standard: classes begin at 8:30 a.m. and end by 2:30 p.m.

- The program is accredited, and does grant GED certificates.

- The Mi'kmaq Resource Development Corporation (an initiative of HRDC - Regional Bilateral Agreements) is responsible for funding the literacy project at Corner Brook. Students are also supported through special arrangement made with EI and social assistance.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Of particular importance to this program is the role of the coordinator. She is responsible for all aspects of the program, from intake assessments to personal and academic support for each learner. In addition, she negotiates arrangements with a local, private college, Academy Canada. With an efficient system of seat-purchase agreements, she can ensure an adequate number of places for the program's participants at a relatively low cost.

Perhaps the greatest challenge that faces the Corner Brook program is the pending structural change, which will affect its delivery in the future. It is a cause for concern, and as Chief Newman has mentioned, re-organization must be effected with care and sensitivity if the essence of the program and its enrolment level are to remain constant. Other concerns to deal with include day care and transportation arrangements, and, of course, consistent funding.

The program is one of a number of Adult Basic Education programs offered in Aboriginal communities under the joint auspices of the local Chief and Band Council, the Federation of Newfoundland Indians and the Mi'kmaq Resources Development Corporation (MRD). ABE programs are currently offered to adult learners in the Aboriginal communities of Flat Bay, Bartlett's Harbour and Corner Brook. In addition to program subsidies, the MRD has provided financial assistance in the past to enable the program organizers to engage a coordinator to do outreach and publicity, administration of the program, liaison and coordination, some tutoring and counselling of students if and when appropriate. There is currently some consideration being given by the MRD to the possibility of terminating the coordinator function in each of the current programs and negotiating directly with local secondary or post-secondary institutions in these communities to purchase seats in existing programs. If such a program approach is adopted, it is unlikely, for the purposes of this directory, that the program will be categorized as an Aboriginal ABE program as this directory defines them.

Flat Bay Adult Basic Education Program (FBABE)
Flat Bay Indian Band Council
Box 375
St. Georges, Newfoundland
A0N 1Z0

Resource Contact: Chief Calvin White

Host Organization: Flat Bay Indian Band Council

Communities Served: Primarily residents of Flat Bay, but also communities of Georgeville Crossing and St. Georges

Program Mission & Objectives:

When it first began its operations in the early 1980s, the Flat Bay program was intended to address the needs of its 350 residents by offering basic literacy training. Since then, it has expanded its mandate so that it now provides intermediate upgrading as well. Students can now complete their high-school equivalency through the program. Its overall objective is to improve the employment and economic prospects of its participants.

The structure of the program, however, is somewhat unique. While it is managed by the Band Council, its various courses are actually offered by various local education institutions. In essence, the Band Council determines each year the needs of its community through consultation, and then proceeds to make the necessary programming arrangements with local schools and colleges. This gives the Council a certain latitude in choosing a given program or school. As Chief White explains, "We go with whoever can provide the best program service for the cheapest price – assuming, of course, that they have what our community wants and needs." And while a standard mainstream curriculum is used, the Chief and Council insist that the programs are offered within the community of Flat Bay, thereby ensuring for its residents the convenience and comfort of "in-house" programming – essential factors for success.

The most recent programming involved an arrangement with the local campus of the College of the North Atlantic. A group of intermediate-level learners were enrolled in an upgrading course which allowed them to progress at their own speed, and to complete the requirements for the GEDs. Many of these graduates have expressed an interest in acquiring computer and office administration skills. The Band Council has responded in kind, with new programming underway to meet these needs

Flat Bay's program is one of a number of basic ABE programs encouraged and supported by the Federation of Newfoundland Indians. *[See note Page 23]*

Program Features:

- Staffing for this program is somewhat unconventional amongst literacy programs. The Band Council arranges for outreach workers and volunteers to conduct an annual survey within the community to determine education needs. Actual programs are staffed by the regular personnel in the school or college offering a designated program.

- There are, at the moment, 16 learners in the FBABE program, all of whom are women who have completed the last series of ABE programming and are proceeding on to intermediate levels.

- Methodology varies according to the program offered. Most, however, offer a combination of conventional classroom or group work, and individual study that allows for self-pacing. Aboriginal perspectives on the curriculum are injected by the community itself, which ensures a sensitivity to Aboriginal values that is not found in more formal education environments.

- The programs operate throughout the academic year on a conventional 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. schedule. Regular programming is supplemented by field trips to local entrepreneurs, who are in turn invited to speak to the students.

- Funding arrangements are considerably different from those in other provinces. Because of the particular relationship between most of the Mi'kmaq communities of Newfoundland and the federal government (i.e., the government recognizes only one of the many First Nations communities in Newfoundland), this program has survived and prospered through the determined efforts of volunteers. These individuals have negotiated funding through the Regional Bilateral Agreements held by the Federation of Newfoundland Indians.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Chief White discusses some of the challenges of operating the program. Maintaining the motivation of learners in the basic literacy component is generally the most challenging barrier. To some extent the Council has managed to maintain learner enrolment and motivation by special arrangement with the HRDC, which permits students to receive EI benefits while enrolled in the Adult Basic Education program. Those who are not eligible for EI benefits receive a stipend from the Mi'kmaq Resource Development Corporation. These have proven to be effective support mechanisms for the learners. Students whose financial worries have been reduced tend to remain with the program until completion. And, as Chief White explains, "Students know that if they do not do the work, if they do not want to attend the courses, there is someone else ready to take their place."

Note:

The program is one of a number of Adult Basic Education programs offered in Aboriginal communities under the joint auspices of the local Chief and Band Council, the Federation of Newfoundland Indians and the Mi'kmaq Resources Development Corporation (MRD). ABE programs are currently offered to adult learners in the Aboriginal communities of Flat Bay, Bartlett's Harbour and Corner Brook. In addition to program subsidies, the MRD has provided financial assistance in the past to enable the program organizers to engage a coordinator to do outreach and publicity, administration of the program, liaison and coordination, some tutoring and counselling of students if and when appropriate. There is currently some consideration being given by the MRD to the possibility of terminating the coordinator function in each of the current programs and negotiating directly with local secondary or post-secondary institutions in these communities to purchase seats in existing programs. If such a program approach is adopted, it is unlikely, for the purposes of this directory, that the program will be categorized as an Aboriginal ABE program as this directory defines them.

Aboriginal Strategic Initiatives Program
22A St. Catherine Street
Grand Falls - Windsor, Newfoundland
A2A 1V8
Tel: (709) 489-3400

Resource Contact: Lorraine Hillier, Instructor

Host Organization: Exploits Indian Band Council, 134 Main St., Grand Falls -Windsor, A2B 1J8 Tel: (709) 489-8425 Fax: (709) 489-8417

Communities Served: Aboriginal women of the Grand Falls - Windsor, Bishop Falls and surrounding area

Program Mission & Objectives:

"To learn, one first has to believe that she can learn. To accomplish that, she first has to feel good about herself. And she must begin to believe in her innate capacity to use her natural abilities as well as to acquire new skills."

The philosophy that underscores the literacy program at the Aboriginal Strategic Initiatives Program (ASIP) emphasizes the notion of personal empowerment. The program is designed to provide a bridge for women to move from where they are to where they want to be. To accomplish this, ASIP offers extensive support in personal development and self-esteem – both essential factors in the acquisition of good life skills.

In essence, ASIP is a preparatory life-skills program that includes a strong emphasis on overcoming personal barriers including completing basic education. To this end, the program offers a variety of opportunities designed to upgrade literacy and employment skills. In conjunction with the College of the North Atlantic and with local employers and entrepreneurs, ASIP offers basic education and career-skills upgrading to its participants. It enables students to complete Adult Basic Education (ABE) at the college as part of the program. Through field trips into the community, the students have hands-on learning of existing employment opportunities and community services in the region.

Sponsored by the Exploits Indian Band Council, the program is undergoing a transition period as the Council gradually assumes greater responsibility for the program's direction and administration.

Program Features:

- ASIP has two full-time staff members: Coordinator – Carol-Ann Power, and Instructor – Lorraine Hillier.

- ASIP's two full-time employees are assisted by having access to the permanent teaching staff at the College of the North Atlantic.

- There are 12 Mi'kmaq women in the program; they range in age from 19 to 50 years. Most have basic literacy skills and are working on GED courses.

- The curriculum covers many subjects ranging from personal life skills to career development: small group-style classes are offered to present topics such as family education, interpersonal relations, health education, and life-skills acquisition. In addition, the program invites local guest speakers to address the classes about their own career paths. Women are encouraged to investigate the various possibilities that await them in the employment field through information interviews and job shadowing.

- The 30-week program operates daily from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The various programs are located both at the ASIP facilities and at the local campus of the College of the North Atlantic. Within six months after the program is finished, a follow-up will take place with each individual student to see how each student met her long-term goals as indentified in the program.

- The program is jointly funded by the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and the Human Resources and Employment Departments of the provincial government.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

The primary motivation for most learners entering the program is the desire to build self-esteem. This they accomplish by active learning within a supportive small-group environment. The setting is nurturing and safe, and confidence is built by the group's successes in their various projects. This in turn generates within the students a sense of self-worth and dignity. Ms. Hillier observes that the program's philosophy is indeed rooted in this notion: lasting learning cannot be sustained if the individual is constantly struggling to construct or maintain a positive self-image. Without question, the emphasis on personal growth and mutual support creates an empowering environment where participants can realize that success is possible.

The major challenge that currently faces the program is the inadequacy of a relevant Aboriginal curriculum that speaks to the Mi'kmaq experience in Newfoundland. To some degree this problem is offset with the injection of some extra-curricular Aboriginal materials through partnerships with the local museum, the Exploits Indian Band Council office, guest speakers, and sharing of one's own history through storytelling.

Regional Overview
Newfoundland and Labrador

During the course of our research, several interesting adult learning centers and initiatives were identified whose clientele are mainly Aboriginal people. North of Goose Bay, the Labrador Inuit Association has developed initiatives to train trainers and interpreters in Inuttitut, but currently does not deliver direct services to adult learners. South of Goose Bay, in Port Hope Simpson, Normand Bay, Mary's Harbour and Charlottetown, there are growing adult literacy initiatives and community learning centers which provide tutoring and instruction on demand in a wide variety of areas, in small groups, one-on-one or using computer assisted techniques. These initiatives may work collaboratively with several groups, for example the Labrador Métis Association and/or the Labrador Institute of Northern Studies, and in the past, benefitted from training subsidies provided under the Federal TAGS program of support to fishing communities.

Despite a high level of Aboriginal participation as both managers and clients of these initiatives and centers, we have not included formal profiles of these activities here for the simple reason that they do not identify themselves as specifically 'Aboriginal', and for good reason: it has been a clear practical and philosophical choice for these activities, in the context of regional economic hardship, geographic isolation and a desire to nurture the strength and self-reliance of communities as a whole, not to create a sense of division along linguistic or racial lines. For more information about adult literacy and up-grading initiatives in Labrador, contact Janet Skinner at the Labrador Institute of Northern Studies, or Betty Samson of the Port Hope Simpson Community Learning Center at (709) 960-0236.

♦♦♦

"In our English language course, we use all native authors -

not just as role models, but for the content and

the native way at looking at the word."

♦♦♦

Afton First Nation
Afton, Antigonish County
Nova Scotia
B0HJ 1A0
Tel: w. (902) 386-2781
h. (902) 386-2259

Resource Contact: Doreen Prosper, Adult Education Coordinator

Host Organization: Afton First Nation Band Council

Communities Served: Afton First Nation

Program Mission & Objectives:

Begun in 1996, the Afton literacy program is a growing project. As its core group of students advance in academic skills, so does the program expand to accommodate their needs. From offering only Level 1 (i.e., Grades 1 to 5) in its first year, the program has since been extended to offer Levels 2 and 3. Ultimately, the program will offer all four levels necessary for its students to successfully complete their GEDs.

Its broad mandate is to provide all adults in the community with a basic education. To this end, the program uses the provincial curriculum, which is enhanced by the coordinator with a good deal of Aboriginal culture and language. In addition, Afton's literacy project is affiliated with the Kjipuktuk Aboriginal College in Halifax. As a result, it benefits from curricular, resource and funding support. Further support and assistance for the program comes from the education committee and from the Chief and Council of Afton First Nation.

Before commencing the program, learners are given an initial assessment by the Coordinator. She begins the basic curriculum with those whose scores are lowest, and picks up students as the group progresses through the curriculum. The program initially began with a group of learners whose literacy skills were assessed at Level 1 (i.e., below sixth grade). At present, these students are completing Level 3, and will continue on to Level 4.

Program Features:

- The program is currently staffed by one full-time practitioner (Ms. Prosper) and occasional volunteers.

- At present, the learners number 22, of which 18 are women. All students are members of the Afton First Nation community. With the exception of two students who entered the program at Level 2 (Grades 6 to 8), all learners began the program with little formal schooling. The learners began with Level 1, and have now progressed through Level 3.

- Teaching methodology consists mainly of small classroom setting with a considerable proportion of one-on-one tutoring. The program operates during the normal school year, but during mornings only. Emphasis is placed on the fundamentals – reading, writing, arithmetic and some science – as well as substantial focus on life skills and on Mi'kmaq culture, history and language.

- Upon completion of Level 4, students receive their GEDs – provincially accredited high-school equivalency certificates.

- Funding is derived from the provincial government as well as from Kjipuktuk Aboriginal College.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Typically, adult learners are motivated to begin the program by a need for self-improvement. And the desire to help their own children in school is perhaps the most commonly-cited reason given for remaining with the program. Some learners hope to pursue college-level studies upon completion of the GED curriculum.

Students are attracted to the program by a number of features. Perhaps most important is that it is very much a part of the closely-knit Afton community. Students organize and participate in spiritual and social activities within the community as part of their education experience. A strong presence of Mi'kmaq language and cultural customs is an effective learning tool in the program. Aboriginal language has proven quite effective in explaining English concepts and ideas.

The sense of community and belonging also provides emotional support for the learners as they progress through the curriculum. In addition, the Coordinator is a central figure for the learners, one whose dedication is deeply appreciated. Her constant presence and philosophy of "getting the learners over the hard spots in the program, and sometimes in their lives" is fundamental to the program's success.

Some of the program's more practical attributes include day-care facilities and proximity of location: the program operates in the community fire hall, thus eliminating the need for extended travel. (Although one of the drawbacks of its locale becomes evident in the event of a fire – classes are temporarily suspended!)

Among the challenges the Afton literacy project must contend with are isolation and scarcity of funding.

Indian Brook First Nation
Mi'kmaq Post Office
Hants County, Nova Scotia
B0N 1W0
Tel: (902) 758-3564
Fax: (902) 758-1419

Resource Contact: Sally Gehue

Communities Served: Indian Brook First Nation

Program Mission & Objectives:

This is a literacy program under formation. At one time Indian Brook did have such a program, but as political and funding priorities shifted, the adult basic literacy project was discontinued. Facilitators Sally Gehue and Terry Knockwood have confirmed that the need still exists within the community (perhaps now, more than ever) and, depending upon funding, they hope to have one in place by late fall 1999.

The community itself, however, must contend with a number of challenges. Because so many parents within the community have poor literacy skills, very little emphasis has been placed on the value of education. Furthermore, many parents are embarrassed by their own illiteracy, which often comes to light when asked to assist their children in studies and homework. Because of this, several parents have withdrawn their children from Gehue's after-school tutoring program.

Consequently, the children of the community have demonstrated an extremely high drop-out rate (estimated by Darrell Landry of the Kjipuktuk Aboriginal College to be as high as 70% to 80 %). Landry, who has been consulted regarding the situation at Indian Brook, suggests that these statistics do not reflect a learning disability as much as it indicates a community-wide issue: "When you consider the fact that 95 of the 150 students here are at risk, we are not dealing with a disability. These kids are in an uphill struggle to break the cycle." The situation has become a social problem. Clearly then the issue of literacy must target the entire community. The facilitators suggest that the implementation of any adult learning program must focus upon education as an asset to the whole family and to the community itself. Family literacy is a crucial objective if the planned literacy program is to succeed in Indian Brook.

Yet despite the somewhat grim perspective, there is definitely a sense of hope and potential. At the moment, Indian Brook offers an after-school tutoring program geared toward high-school students. It is a no-nonsense, tough-love environment where kids come because they know they can get help. And Ms. Gehue points out the successes. Six students are graduating from high school this term, and two of them plan to further their studies. The After-School program continues to assist students in learning the essentials, and once adequate funding is in place, Ms. Gehue is optimistic that the adult literacy project will thrive.

Literacy is a right
not a gift.

Kjipuktuk Aboriginal College
2158 Gottingen Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3K 3B4
Tel: (902) 420-0686
Fax: (902) 423-6130

Resource Contact: Darrell Landry, Director

Host Organization: Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre

Communities Served: Greater Halifax region & First Nations communities in the area

Program Mission & Objectives:

A fairly comprehensive institution, the Kjipuktuk Aboriginal College defines its mission as one which "strives to offer educational programs tailored to the needs of First Nations people". And in fact, it has been attempting to establish a province-wide Aboriginal college. Since its inception in 1985, the college has offered a variety of adult education programs designed to meet the needs of adult learners at various stages of literacy: the Native Literacy Centre, the Academic Upgrading Program (Levels 1 to 4), Computer Applications for Business (CAB), Office Administrative Training Program (OATP), the Early Childhood Education Program, the Native Science and Health Careers Program and the University & College Preparation Program (UCPP). In addition, Kjipuktuk provides employment counselling to individuals looking for immediate employment, or who are interested in re-training.

The training programs offered through the college are intended to accommodate the needs of adult First Nations learners as well as those of the business community. The academic programs focus on the academic and personal development of the adult learner in preparation for post-secondary programs. All programs endeavour to provide the student with the skills and attitudes that will ensure success in his or her chosen occupation. The basic literacy program for returning learners, in particular, places a significant emphasis on fundamental life skills and provides a good deal of information for self-care (nutrition, hygiene, etc.).

Admission assessment is a thorough and varied process that involves a series of tests and interviews with each applicant. In addition to the Canadian Adult Achievement Test, personal interviews and goal-setting exercises provide a fairly accurate estimate of an applicant's placement within the program.

The college works in tandem with the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre. Not only does it share quarters with the Centre, it also avails itself of the various support services offered to the Aboriginal learners. Moreover, policy governance and support for the college comes from the Board of Directors of the Friendship Centre.

Program Features:

- Kjipuktuk's staff is composed of one director, one assistant, one secretary, and eight teachers, all of whom work at the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre.

- At the moment, there are 52 learners enrolled in various programs at the college. Nearly all are male; median age of the students in the higher-level programs is 24 years, but it is considerably higher in the programs dealing with basic literacy. Average grade achievement is Grade 9. Most learners in Levels 1 and 2 are currently unemployed and require social assistance.

- Teaching methodology is fairly conventional: small classrooms with lectures and instruction, with relatively little one-on-one tutoring. The school schedule is also standard: programs run during the day (9:00 a.m. to 15:30 p.m.) from September to May. Each year, students may progress to their next appropriate level.

- The college is accredited with the Department of Education. In addition, Kjipuktuk is affiliated with the provincial community college system which is, in fact, the degree-conferring organization.

- Kjipuktuk receives its funding from a number of sources; the Human Resources Development Canada (HRCD), the Pathways Secretariat of Nova Scotia, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, as well as the Province of Nova Scotia.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Almost all the learners have chosen the college because it offers a safe learning environment. Many have learned of the college through friends and peers, and are attracted by its reputation and accommodating atmosphere. And certainly self-esteem is an important motivating factor. Darrell Landry emphasizes the school appeal: "The programs provide an opportunity to better themselves, to regain some dignity and to help them get a handle on how to relate to their kids when they are learning. Many learners are here because of their kids."

The staff at Kjipuktuk have acquired a certain expertise in their field, largely due to the college's size and support. As a result, Kjipuktuk has been able to offer some assistance to various Aboriginal literacy projects in the province. Indeed, it is seen by several practitioners as a resource for Aboriginal education. The Director cites the multi-faceted intake assessments as well as the off-reserve life-skills manual developed at Kjipuktuk as examples of resources available for use by other literacy projects.

Millbrook Literacy Centre
PO Box 634
Truro, Nova Scotia
B2N 5E5
Tel: (902) 895-4592
Fax: (902) 893-8215
E-mail: ppmartin@north.nsis.com

Resource Contact: Patsy-Paul Martin, Director

Host Community: Millbrook Band Council

Communities Served: Band members of Millbrook First Nation

Program Mission & Objectives:

Perhaps the Mission Statement of the Millbrook Literacy Centre best summarizes the current education dilemma of the Aboriginal population: "Natives in Nova Scotia, as in most areas of Canada, have faced innumerable problems adjusting to the traditional non-Native educational programs, particularly those who have spent most of their lives within the comforting framework of a Native community."

The Centre's mandate is somewhat unique in that it adopts computer-based, individualized study as the core of its program. The philosophy at Millbrook recognizes the fact that the computer is an invaluable teaching tool, particularly for adult learners. Indeed, the Centre's Mission Statement advances this notion: "We feel that this is an extremely important component of the program. The computer, as a tutor, removes the fear of the embarrassment of a classroom setting. Individualized study allows the participant to study at his or her own pace."

There are two levels of programming available at Millbrook: Basic Upgrading (basic reading, language arts, math and life skills) and Advanced GED Upgrading (advanced writing, reading, social studies, science, advanced math). Both of these streams are taught with an elaborate computer program (PLATO system). However, until they become familiar and adept with the concepts presented on PLATO, students in Level 1 begin with classroom study. Staff members act as both classroom instructors and tutors. Should a student encounter difficulties with the computer program, the instructors and their peers are ready to provide assistance.

The Centre was established in 1988 as the result of an assessment made of community needs. At that time, the Chief and Council gave priority to adult education, and they continue to provide support and governance for the program itself. In order to be eligible for the program, learners must be Aboriginal adults (aged 19 or older), out of school for one year, and unemployed. Assessment testing is conducted in order to organize a tailored program of study for each student. Moreover, the method allows for a continuous intake of students. With independent study, students can begin the program and proceed at their own pace.

Program Features:

- The program is staffed by two full-time facilitators who are members of the Millbrook Band. Although there are no volunteers, learners often adopt a "buddy system" when further assistance is needed.

- There are currently 30 students enrolled in the program, ranging in age between 25 to 35 years. The average level of schooling upon entering the program is Grade 8. About 75% of participants remain with the centre to complete their GEDs.

- Because the program is designed to maximize individual learning, methodology consists primarily of computer-assisted learning for each student, supplemented with tutoring support when needed. This methodology also allows for a continuous intake of students. Classroom lectures are offered to Level 1 students until they familiarize themselves with the computer software.

- Aboriginal culture is included in the curriculum by participating in community events. Since the teaching software contains little Aboriginal content and no Mi'kmaq language, the Centre places particular emphasis on these in the life skills component of the program.

- The program's duration is 40 weeks, and operates from Mondays to Fridays between 8:45 a.m. and 2:45 p.m. The program of study is grouped into three daily components: one third is spent on life skills, the remaining two-thirds of course time is divided equally between computer tutorials and independent study.

- The bulk of Millbrook's funding comes from the Band (through HRDC); a small proportion is provided by Community Literacy Initiatives (CLI-NS). A portion of funding is earmarked for a weekly stipend for each student.

- Affiliated with the Kjipuktuk Aboriginal College, Millbrook offers an accredited program leading to GED certificates.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

The Centre places considerable emphasis on life skills. Director Patsy-Paul Martin notes that this is a critical component: "We want to build self-esteem, and we want to create a program with great flexibility that relates to the reality of learners and the world they live in, with all the challenges and problems."

Students enjoy the familiar, non-competitive environment at the Centre, and its appreciation for the Aboriginal experience. Although there is little Aboriginal content in the PLATO computer software, the group makes up for this deficit by participating in pow-wows, Talking Circles and other Aboriginal activities. This is an aspect of the program that makes learners feel comfortable and at home.

Typically, funding is an issue both for the centre and the students themselves. To a certain extent, the program does accommodate the financial needs of its students. Those receiving Employment Insurance can have their benefits extended while participating in the Literacy program. Students are also subsidized with a weekly stipend which allows them some money for day care and transportation costs. This is an important motivational factor that Martin notes is crucial for maintaining enrolment.

Unama'ki Training and Education Centre (TEC)
RR #2 East Bay
Eskasoni, Nova Scotia
B0A 1H0
Tel: (902) 379-2758
Fax: (902) 379-2586

Resource Contact: Barry Wildman, Director

Host Community: Unama'ki First Nation

Communities Served: Unama'ki (Cape Breton) Mi'kmaq Community

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Unama'ki Training and Education Centre (TEC) is a comprehensive adult learning facility that offers a wide range of education and vocation programs. Its mission is to offer "adult educational programming uniquely designed to meet the needs of the Unama'ki (Cape Breton) community". Through its comprehensive curricula, TEC enables its Aboriginal students to pursue career- and university-track studies in an environment that sustains Mi'kmaq values and culture. TEC's programs relate to the education directorate of the First Nation community. TEC is ultimately accountable to the Chief and Council.

TEC's scope reaches beyond basic literacy courses for its Aboriginal clientele. While literacy is an important part of the programs available at TEC, it is by no means its only focus. Established in 1990, TEC now administers 19 distinct programs in the following areas: Adult Education (Day Program, Literacy upgrading, Internet access), Secondary Education (High School, Alternate Grade 9, Co-op program), Post-secondary Education (UCCB Access), Employment (Student internships), Vocational training (Internet, Communications, Advanced Accounting). More than two-thirds of TEC graduates proceed to further education, training or employment.

The only requirement for admission to TEC is that learners be people of Aaboriginal ancestry living on or off-reserve in Cape Breton. Students are initially assessed through a combination of formal testing and interviews with staff members to determine skills and placement.

Program Features:

- TEC is comprehensively staffed by 24 teachers (of which 17 are full-time).
- Learners in the Adult Literacy programs constitute well over a third of the Centre's 355 students. Currently, there are 133 learners in the various literacy programs: 30 learners are enrolled in the Levels 1 and 2 literacy programs. More than half (about 55%) of the learners are women. The average age is about 30 years.

- Methodology is varied and depends a good deal upon the academic skills of the students themselves: learners in Levels 1 and 2 are generally placed in a classroom setting to maintain motivation. Those in Levels 3 and 4 thrive in a more individualized learning environment. These students work best in tutorials and with computer-assisted learning. All students participate in classroom environments to varying degrees and seem to benefit from an ideal Aboriginal learning environment – individual-paced learning in a social group setting.

- TEC's academic structure is fairly conventional. Like most colleges and advanced-level institutions, the Centre operates both Day and Evening Divisions throughout the school year. Courses are offered in full- or part-time modules that range between three and ten months' duration. The Centre itself is operational 60 hours per week.

- All of TEC's programs are accredited by the province's department of education.

- TEC's operating budget of $1.1 million is among the most substantial of Aboriginal literacy projects. Financial support for TEC comes from ten different sources, most of which are various agencies of the federal and provincial governments: INAC Nominal Roll (representing the largest portion of funding at 28% of TEC's budget), HRDC , Nova Scotia Links, ECBC, National Literacy Secretariat, Eskasoni School Board.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

TEC is firmly established within the community. Due to its size and support, TEC appeals to its clientele because it can meet the needs of its students. Resources are abundant; state-of-the-art computer facilities, learning tools, sufficient staff as well as day care (offered through the community) are here to support its adult learners. But perhaps even more important is the emphasis placed on cultural values and language. Mi'kmaq language is an indispensable element of the learning experience.

Previous NLS funding (approximately $40K) for curriculum development has been applied to the production of a series of educational videos. Copies of these are currently available for purchase, proceeds from which are reinvested in learning resources for the program.

In a final noteworthy point, Unama'ki TEC is something of an anomaly among literacy programs, in that funding is not a critical issue for this institute. It is therefore able to offer assistance in programming to other First Nations communities in the vicinity.

"If you do not take people where they are at and recognize their worth and need for dignity, learning just isn't going to happen."

Big Cove First Nation CASP
Site 11, Box 1
Big Cove, New Brunswick
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Tel: (506) 523-4875

Resource Contact: Sarah Simon, Coordinator & Instructor

Host Community: Big Cove First Nation

Communities Served: Big Cove First Nation

Program Mission & Objectives:

First begun in 1993, the Big Cove program not only offers the standard CASP curriculum of English, math, science and social studies, but seeks to include a focus on the community and Aboriginal values in its approach to learning. The Big Cove program currently offers the standard CASP two-level structure designed to cover Grades 1 to 6. In addition, the CASP curriculum is also supplemented with some sessions in specific life skills and computer training. And a new, intermediate-level program is currently under consideration. The local CASP Committee provides policy support when required by the staff.

Focus on the Aboriginal community and its values has become an important consideration in this literacy program. Toward this end, program facilitator Sarah Simon is working on a simple, straight-forward curriculum that incorporates Aboriginal values and culture into the basic literacy program devised by CASP. Although the language of communication is English, learners often use Mi'kmaq amongst themselves to explain and clarify concepts discussed in the classroom. In addition, learners have access to two hours of Mi'kmaq language per week. The presence of Elders (as students) in the program here has had a tremendous impact on both the students and the community itself. Not only are attitudes of the younger students enriched by their presence, but the community itself seems to benefit. For example, an Elder recently prepared a number of Mi'kmaq songs which learners have sung in a choir – much to the appreciation of the entire community.

Initial assessment for admission is uncomplicated. Applicants to the program are asked to complete a registration form, although some lack the literacy skills to do so. For this reason, placement in the program is determined by informal discussions with the facilitator, who can then assess the applicant's literacy skills and abilities.

Program Features:

- Two full-time instructors and one occasional volunteer currently provide the staffing at Big Cove CASP.

- There are currently 24 adult students in the program, of which 20 are women. Their ages range between 37 and 45, and their average level of schooling is Grade 5.

- Teaching methodology consists primarily of conventional classroom setting. However, with participation of Elders (as learners) in the program, one-on-one tutoring is also employed.

- Program length is standard among the CASP system: 40 weeks of six hours per day (i.e., full-time), totalling 1200 hours. Big Cove offers a flexible variation, allowing students to attend morning or afternoon sessions totalling 1200 hours of instruction. As is the case with all CASP projects, Big Cove CASP is funded by Literacy New Brunswick (an initiative of the NB Department of Advanced Education and Labour); 80% of Big Cove's budget derives from CASP, the balance comes from the local Pathways program, and is handled through the Band. In addition, all learners receive a small allowance from the Band while attending the program.

- The program is accredited with the Department of Advanced Education and Labour (DAEL). Students who complete the program may sit for DAEL testing, and are eligible for a DAEL certificate upon a passing grade. In addition, students may progress to higher education (beyond Grade 6) which is provided by the Education division of the First Nations community.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Many participants initially enrol in the program as a means to assist their own children as they progress through school. However, most realize that the program is an essential stepping stone to higher education (and hence to better job prospects). It is, in fact, the only program in the community that can provide the kind of assistance they need. Moreover, students appreciate the program's flexibility (students can choose morning or afternoon sessions) as well as its ties to the community and Aboriginal values.

In fact, these are aspects that Sarah wants to continue to develop in the CASP program. Not only does the program's involvement with various community activities give the students a lot of pleasure, the presence of Aboriginal values actually increases the learning gradient. Sarah observes that, "Comprehension increases substantially if there is Aboriginal content in the material used."

As a facilitator, Ms. Simon's work is multi-dimensional; she provides her students with counselling, referrals, specific life-skills. Part of this work entails maintaining her students' motivation and perspective. "When both the learner and I know that the learner has defined a goal that may be beyond her reach right now, we break it down in little pieces and organize themselves around smaller goals. This seems to help." Some professional development is available for the Big Cove staff. Ms. Simon is able to participate in regional literacy meetings and training sessions once or twice a year.

Burnt Church First Nations CASP
Esgenoopetitjg Learning Centre
Burnt Church
RR #2
Lagacéville, New Brunswick
E0C 1K0
Tel: (506) 776-1201

Resource Contact: Matilda Francis – Coordinator

Host Community: Burnt Church First Nation

Communities Served: Members of Burnt Church First Nations

Program Mission & Objectives:

After a brief hiatus, the Burnt Church CASP program was revived in September of 1997 to provide opportunities for adult students to improve basic literacy and mathematical skills. In accordance with the basic CASP curriculum, the program consists of a two-tiered scheme designed to accommodate its clientele's various levels of education. Level 1 covers Grades 1 to 6, while Level 2 includes Grades 7 to 9. In addition to this basic CASP structure, Burnt Church has introduced a "final years" program to cover Grades Ten to 12. Courses are offered in math, English, science and social studies.

Admission to the program is based on an assessment test devised by the Community College of New Brunswick (CCNB) supplemented with careful questions designed to probe the student's weaker points. And with a view to improving the process, the instructors are in the process of devising a new assessment test. In addition, admission requirements stipulate that the student must be returning to school following a minimum two-year absence. This requirement ensures that its clientele are indeed adult learners seeking to upgrade their education and employment potential.

Program Features:

- The program is run by two facilitators. Additional tutoring comes from upper-level students who occasionally assist other students.

- There are currently 13 students enrolled in the program. The majority are in their 20s and are male (i.e., eight of the 13 participants are men). For Level 1, the average grade level of formal schooling is Grade 2 or 3. In Level 2, it is Grade 8 or 9.

- Teaching methodology is primarily one-on-one. All students work in the same classroom, and consideration is made for the various levels of education. The environment allows for a good deal of peer support during the actual learning experience.

- While the curriculum allows little room for Aboriginal content, Mi'kmaq language is used in the classroom as a means to acquiring English. In essence, this strategy has proven to be extremely useful to the students by allowing the academic subjects to be "interpreted through a Mi'kmaq lens". Learning therefore becomes more easily accessible for the students. Elders from the First Nations community are occasionally present in the program, thereby injecting an element of Aboriginal culture into the curriculum.

- Program length is standard among the CASP system: 40 weeks of six hours per day (i.e., full-time), totalling 1200 hours. Daily sessions are offered in two periods; i.e., 9:00 a.m. to noon and 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. In addition, two evening classes per week are offered, and a third is under consideration.

- Burnt Church CASP is funded by Literacy New Brunswick (an initiative of the NB Department of Advanced Education and Labour); the community is required to furnish $3000 in order to receive a $16,000 allotment from CASP. All funding is administered through the CASP organization, and funds are transferred to voluntary boards within the community which, in turn, oversee implementation of the programs.

- The program is accredited with the Department of Advanced Education and Labour (DAEL). Students who complete the program may sit for DAEL testing, and are eligible for a DAEL certificate upon a passing grade.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Students are attracted to the program by its nurturing environment and well-defined support system. Moreover, a number cite the trusting relationship they have developed with their teacher as an important motivation in the program. But an interesting, if typical, distinction arises between students in the two levels. While upper-level students tend to be very confident in their life skills and goals, students in the lower level require more support and encouragement. And this is where the program's accommodating environment is most appreciated. A single classroom with plenty of peer and facilitator support is an invaluable feature of the program. Matilda Francis, who is currently the Level 1 facilitator, is herself a graduate of the pre-CASP Burnt Church literacy project. As such her experience and insight are particularly effective with the students.

Sensitivity toward the community itself is also apparent among the CASP facilitators of Burnt Church. For example, within the community a certain stigma is attached to the term "literacy". In deference to this apprehension, the facilitators therefore refer to their program as adult learning or "upgrading".

In terms of support for the instructors themselves, Joan Paul (exiting coordinator) notes that they have had some opportunity to 'network' with other CASP coordinators through the CCNB. However, Burnt Church has had little occasion to participate in any provincial or national Aboriginal literacy conferences and would certainly welcome the opportunity to do so.

Eel Ground First Nations CASP
Eel Ground Development Centre
40 Mic Mac Road
Eel Ground, New Brunswick
E1V 4B1
Tel: (506) 627-4604

Resource Contact: Lana Hallihan

Host Community: Eel Ground First Nation

Communities Served: Eel Ground & Red Bank

Program Mission & Objectives:

Eel Ground's objective is to provide its learners with a basic education while allowing them to pursue their goals in a relaxed, informal environment. Following the standard CASP model, Eel Ground offers one stream for basic literacy skills (Grades 1 through 6) and a second stream for intermediate skills (Grades 7 to 9).

This is very much a conventional CASP program, with focus placed firmly on the fundamentals: English, math, science, social studies. With the exception of some ongoing counselling and monitoring, the program is restricted to covering the basic general curriculum.

This CASP program is administered through the Eel Ground First Nation community. Learner assessment is accomplished through a combination of informal meetings, evaluation tests and standard Community College assessments, depending on the individual's level of achievement.

Program Features:

- Eel Ground's CASP is staffed by one person who is assisted in administrative duties by the CASP coordinator.

- Enrolment in the program has fluctuated as a result of community work projects. When such projects are available, students will frequently leave the program to pursue temporary and/or part-time employment. Originally, 13 adult students were registered in the program; there are currently six: three women, three men. All are Aboriginal students ranging in age between 25 and 35; average school level is Grade 8.

- Teaching methodology is intended to provide a relaxed setting for the learners. Because they are at various levels in their education, the program is, in many respects, like a one-room schoolhouse – the teacher spends a portion of her time lecturing, before working with students individually. New students generally require a greater amount of individual attention, while older students can work independently or in small groups.

- The Eel Ground CASP has modified the duration of the program from the conventional CASP requirement. It operates from Monday to Thursday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., and it offers a drop-in-style setting rather than a structured environment.

- It is entirely funded by CASP. The Eel Ground CASP is funded by Literacy New Brunswick (an initiative of the NB Department of Advanced Education and Labour).

- The program is accredited with the Department of Advanced Education and Labour (DAEL). Students who complete the program may sit for DAEL testing, and are eligible for a DAEL certificate upon a passing grade.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Learners enrolled in the Eel Ground program have specific goals in mind. Many seek to obtain their high-school certificate; some simply need to be occupied, and know that upgrading their education is a good use of time, and still others have very personal goals in mind – reading to their kids is a remarkably motivating factor.

The Eel Ground project is faced with a number of challenges that have their roots in the community itself. High unemployment is a significant contributor to the socio-economic problems of the community. Student attendance is directly affected by work projects. Furthermore, inadequate funding is apparent in the lack of resources and Aboriginal content in the curriculum. The facilitator suggests that some further development of both the program and its presence within the community would do much to attract more Aboriginal students to the program.

One of the problems faced by the Eel Ground program is the fact that it is relatively unknown. Apart from the Band council and the students currently enrolled in the program, few people in the community are even aware of the CASP program.

St. Mary's First Nation CASP
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Fredericton, NB
E3A 2V9
Tel: 506 458-9511
Fax: 506 458 0606

Resource Contact: Barb Paul

Host Community: St. Mary's First Nation, Fredericton, NB

Communities Served: St. Mary's First Nation
(within municipal boundaries of Fredericton)

Program Mission & Objectives:

The goals of the St Mary's CAS program are to provide a non-competitive, comfortable, learning environment where students are made to feel welcome. Students are encouraged to acquire the skills of interest to them and those that are needed to make them more competitive in the workplace. For the most part, students progress at their own pace. The program also seeks to re-instil a measure of confidence in the learner and to increase his or her self-esteem. The focus of the program is on basic literacy and life skills, including the core subjects of mathematics, English, social sciences, sciences and computer literacy between approximate grade levels of four to nine

The local CASP committee situated within the First Nations community of St. Mary's determines policy and guidelines for the program. Students are subsidized through assistance provided by the local First Nations economic development corporation. The program has been in operation since 1993.

Program Features:

- Courses are offered in a classroom where students progress at their own speed and provide each other with support. Lessons are covered, but they are given considerable time to do their own work and assist each other. There are currently 10 students enrolled in the program with one full-time staff member and an in-class tutor.

- Currently all participants are Aboriginal and most of the students are adults over the age of forty. 70% of the students are female and the average pre-program grade completion is Grade 8.

- The primary motivation for student participation in the program is to enhance their economic prospects - to improve their skills so that they can obtain a better job.

- They are assisted in their development by a modest stipend provided by the program. They enjoy relating to people with similar cultural experiences to their own and relate well to the program as it does emphasize a safe and welcoming learning environment.

- The curriculum is that provided by the provincial department of education, but the program committee attempts to relate the curriculum to aboriginal values and the experience of participants. However, no concerted attempt is made to use or incorporate aboriginal-specific curriculum into their program.

Some Final Observations:

Currently 70% of the total cost of the program is provided by the local economic development corporation with approximately $13,000 provided by through the provincially funded CASP program. Students are encouraged to become involved in community activities and will organize and sponsor dances and social events for the program. There is also a strong emphasis on learner achievement, supported by graduation ceremonies, plaques and other symbols of learner-recognition. Of equal importance is the emphasis placed on encouraging students to 'transit' from their basic education program into other economic development or job creation opportunities available in the community.

Innovations they bring to the aboriginal literacy movement include the financial support they receive from the First Nations community's economic development corporation and the accountable stipend support offered to participating students. The program is well situated and highly regarded within the CASP structure and community college network, but less so within the national aboriginal literacy movement from which, like so many of their sister programs and organizations, they feel isolated.

Despite the generous support provided by the First Nation development corporation, the adequacy of resources to meet the demand and need is a continuing challenge.

♦♦♦

"Comprehension increases substantially if there is native content in material used."

♦♦♦

Cours d'appoint à Mashteuiatsh
École Kassinu Mamu
1711, rue Amishk
Mashteuiatsh (Québec)
G0W 2H0
Tél. : (418) 275-2473
Téléc. : (418) 275-6212

Personne ressource : Madame Louise Nepton, responsable des services éducatifs et résponsable principale de l'école Amishk.

Organisme hôte : Conseil des Montagnais du Lac-Saint-Jean
1671, rue Ouiatchouan
Mashteuiatsh (Québec)
G0W 2H0
(418) 275-2473

Population cible : Adultes en apprentissage de la communauté Mashteuiatsh (Montagnais).

Mission et objectifs du programme :

Le programme à Mashteuiatsch offre des cours d'appoint de niveau secondaire aux adultes en apprentissage de la communauté. La mission du programme consiste à développer un sentiment de fierté et d'estime de soi chez les adultes en apprentissage, en les préparant au marché du travail, en leur donnant une formation qui leur permettra d'obtenir un emploi et en leur offrant la possibilité d'accomplir leurs objectifs académiques et professionnels. Le service de cours d'appoint est offert à la communauté depuis plus de dix ans. En général, 60 étudiants s'inscrivent au programme chaque année.

Les étudiants progressent généralement à leur rythme, et lorsqu'ils en éprouvent le besoin, le professeur leur fournit des explications seul à seul. Normalement, le professeur procède au placement des étudiants d'après les examens de placement fournis par le ministère de l'Éducation du Québec. Les employés des services éducatifs de la Bande tentent de plus en plus d'être présents et de conseiller ou de superviser les progrès des étudiants, puisque par le passé, ces derniers n'avaient souvent aucune idée de leur niveau par rapport aux exigences du ministère et le taux de succès était bas.

Aspects du programme :

- Les étudiants reçoivent des cours d'appoint pour les matières obligatoires qui sont le français et les mathématiques, pour certaines matières optionnelles ainsi que pour une formation professionnelle.

- Le programme est offert tous les jours de 8 h à 15 h 30. Bien qu'en principe le programme doive se dérouler tout au long de l'année scolaire, les étudiants abandonnent les cours peu à peu et le programme doit être fermé en mars ou en avril. Les étudiants qui sont très motivés peuvent fréquenter le centre d'éducation aux adultes à Roberval (non-autochtone) après la fermeture du programme.

- Les étudiants sont âgés en général entre 20 et 30 ans.

- La commission scolaire fournit un professeur de français et un professeur de mathématiques à temps plein qui suivent le programme d'études du ministère de l'Éducation du Québec. Le Conseil de Bande engage un agent d'information scolaire et professionnelle dont les tâches sont partagées entre les étudiants locaux et ceux qui habitent en dehors de la réserve.

- Tous les étudiants sont des autochtones (Montagnais) de la communauté qui ont, en moyenne, sept années de scolarité à leur actif.

- Le budget d'exploitation provient en grande partie de la commission scolaire qui offre les ressources humaines et le matériel. Le Conseil de Bande procure l'espace physique et une certaine coordination concernant la préparation des classes ainsi qu'une certaine supervision des Services de soutien a l'éducation du Conseil des Montagnais.

Dernières remarques :

Selon le personnel du programme, certains étudiants sont réellement motivés par le désir de poursuivre leurs études secondaires dans l'espoir d'accéder à une formation professionnelle, mais d'autres s'inscrivent uniquement parce qu'ils reçoivent un montant supplémentaire de l'assurance sociale ou à cause de la vie sociale procurée par l'environnement scolaire. Les étudiants apprécient de pouvoir étudier dans leur communauté, de recevoir à l'occasion la visite du Chef et d'être engagés dans les activités culturelles. Toujours d'après le personnel, l'un des aspects bénéfiques de ce programme provient du fait qu'il permet d'intégrer d'autres services (services sociaux, services de traitements et services de conseiller) afin de répondre aux besoins des adultes en apprentissage à l'aide d'une méthode holiste. Au cours des deux dernières années, le personnel des services éducatifs de la Bande a tenté de mettre l'accent sur le processus et l'environnement propices à l'apprentissage, plutôt que sur les résultats. Pour ce faire, ils essaient de connaître les besoins de la personne dans son ensemble et non juste le profil académique.

Défis :

Le programme de Mashteuiatsh fait face à deux défis principaux, soit la suffisance de fonds ainsi que le programme d'études et les méthodes d'enseignement adaptés aux étudiants montagnais. Au cours des dernières années, les services éducatifs ont mis sur pied un programme d'alphabétisation (au primaire) qui fonctionnait jusqu'à cette année. Il ne fonctionne plus, car, pour que la commission scolaire attribue un professeur à ce cours, 13 étudiants doivent s'inscrire et cette année cela n'a pas été possible. D'après le personnel du programme, il s'agit d'un nombre non représentatif d'une très petite communauté.

L'enseignement et le programme d'études sont considérés comme des faiblesses du programme, puisqu'il ne sont pas suffisamment adaptés aux besoins de la communauté montagnaise. Plus particulièrement, le personnel des services éducatifs ressent une certaine frustration envers le personnel enseignant désigné par la commission scolaire. Par exemple, il n'est pas inhabituel pour les étudiants, enfants et adultes, de quitter la communauté afin de poursuivre leurs activités traditionnelles dans la forêt à certaines périodes de l'année. Cependant, le personnel désigné par la commission scolaire décourage ces habitudes de vie légitimes et traditionnelles des étudiants, tout en ayant pour leur dire que les comportements non appropriés, tels que les retards ou l'abstentéisme, sont «normaux pour les gens d'origine autochtone». D'après les personnes interrogées, de telles attitudes n'aident pas à promouvoir une image de soi ou un environnement d'apprentissage positifs, et peuvent être une des causes du taux élevé d'abandons, problème continuel du programme.

Centre de développement de la formation
et de la main-d'œuvre Huron-Wendat (CDFM)
30, Rue de l'Ours
Village des Hurons Wendake (Québec)
G0A 4V0
Tél. : (418) 842-6000
Téléc. : (418) 842-3076

Personne ressource : Madame Julie Vincent, conseillère en formation

Organisme hôte : Conseil de la Nation Huronne-Wendat
255, rue Chef Michel Laveau
Village des Hurons Wendake (Québec)
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Tél. : (418) 843-3767
Téléc. : (418) 842-1108

Population cible : Adultes en apprentissage de diverses communautés des Premières Nations francophones
(Huron-Wendat, Montagnais, Atikamek)

Mission et objectifs du programme :

La mission du programme au Village Huron, situé en banlieue de la ville de Québec, comprend deux volets. D'une part elle offre des cours d'appoint aux étudiants qui désirent terminer leurs études secondaires et poursuivre une formation technique ou collégiale. D'autre part, elle offre des cours d'alphabétisation à ceux qui désirent retourner immédiatement sur le marché du travail. Le CDFM offre des cours d'appoint de niveau secondaire, et a mis sur pied le programme KIUGWE qui est conçu aux fins d'alphabétisation, de préparation d'emploi et de placement pour les étudiants moins préparés ou moins intéressés à poursuivre un cheminement scolaire.

Le programme a été mis sur pied par le Centre de développement de la formation et de la main-d'œuvre (CDFM) avec l'aide du Conseil de Bande et de la Commission scolaire Jeune Lorette. Le programme de cours d'appoint est en marche dans la communauté depuis cinq ans, mais le programme KIUGWE en est à sa première année en tant que projet-pilote.

Cette année, 60 étudiants ce sont inscrits : 18 au programme KIUGWE et 42 au programme de cours d'appoint. Onze des 18 étudiants du programme KIUGWE ont pu s'intégrer aux cours d'appoint et le personnel du programme a trouvé des emplois aux sept autres. Dans les cours d'appoint, les étudiants progressent à leur propre rythme et lorsqu'ils rencontrent des difficultés, le professeur les aide seul à seul. Dans le programme KIUGWE, l'enseignement est diffusé par petits groupes.

L'accent est mis sur l'attribution d'objectifs académiques et professionnels aux étudiants. Le personnel du CDFM considère qu'il est de sa responsabilité d'aider les étudiants à se fixer des objectifs réalistes. Les étudiants sont évalués en fonction de leur niveau académique, mais aussi d'après leurs objectifs, leurs attentes, leur motivation et leur engagement à atteindre leurs objectifs. En outre, le progrès de l'étudiant est évalué tous les deux mois afin de vérifier s'ils atteignent leurs objectifs, de connaître les difficultés qu'ils rencontrent et de savoir s'ils ont besoin de services de soutien supplémentaires.

Aspects du programme :

- Les cours d'appoint offrent un enseignement en français, en anglais et en mathématiques ainsi que pour certaines matières optionnelles. Le programme KIUGWE offre des cours d'alphabétisation, de préparation au marché du travail, de connaissances de base de la vie courante, de formation informatique pour débutants ainsi que trois stages de trois semaines en entreprise.

- L'équipe engagée pour le programme est composée de cinq employés à temps complet : deux professeurs d'alphabétisation et de préparation au marché du travail pour le programme KIUGWE, un professeur de cours d'appoint, un conseiller en formation et un responsable de la vie étudiante. Le personnel enseignant provient de la Commission scolaire Jeune Lorette.

- Les cours ont lieu cinq jours par semaine de 8 h 30 à 16 h, et ce pendant toute l'année scolaire qui dure de 30 à 32 semaines.

- La méthode d'enseignement associe le programme d'études de base du ministère de l'Éducation et une approche appelée Compétences fortes qui permet de mettre l'accent sur les talents et les habiletés propres à l'étudiant.

- En général, les étudiants ont entre 25 et 30 ans, mais quelques-uns sont plus âgés ou plus jeunes. Environ la moitié sont des femmes et l'autre des hommes. Tous les étudiants sont de descendance autochtone.

- De façon globale, il y a eu un changement en ce qui concerne la scolarité moyenne des participants du programme. Lorsque les cours d'appoint ont débuté il y a cinq ans, le niveau de scolarité des participants était plutôt bas, puisqu'il se situait au niveau primaire. Cependant, au cours des années, les Hurons-Wendat abandonnent de moins en moins leurs études et les nouveaux étudiants commencent le programme avec un niveau de scolarité plus élevé qu'auparavant.

- Selon le personnel du programme, le contenu de ce dernier, implanté dans la communauté autochotone et au sein de ses institutions, reflète une attention particulière portée sur les origines et les valeurs des autochtones. Le personnel enseignant est encouragé à compléter le programme d'études de base afin de l'adapter aux besoins des étudiants autochtones. Par exemple, les étudiants se sont engagés dans les activités culturelles de la communauté et ont participé à des excursions parascolaires dans la forêt afin d'apprendre quels sont les moyens de subsistence traditionnels. Le personnel du programme a également mentionné qu'un des professeurs a travaillé très fort à l'élaboration de nouvelles méthodes qui aideront les étudiants parlant le montagnais à surmonter les difficultés particulières qu'ils rencontrent au moment d'apprendre à lire et à écrire le français.

- Le personnel du programme estime que de 60 % à 70 % des frais sont pris en charge par la Commission scolaire Jeune Lorette qui fournit le personnel enseignant et le programme d'études. Le Conseil de Bande se charge du reste en ce qui a trait au développement de la main-d'œuvre, l'attribution des salles de classe, la coordination de l'emploi du temps du personnel, l'évaluation et la supervision.

Dernières remarques :

Grâce à la solicitation de la participation des adultes en apprentissage des diverses communauté des Premières Nations, le CDFM Huron-Wendat a été en mesure d'élargir le champ de ses programmes et de ses services comparativement à ce qu'il aurait pu offrir s'il n'avait eu que la clientèle locale. Les étudiants apprécient d'étudier dans un environnement autochtone, mais apprécient également qu'il soit situé près d'un grand centre comme la ville de Québec avec tous ses services et les possibilités qu'elle offre.

La démarche du CDFM fonctionne bien avec les étudiants pour différentes raisons. Premièrement, les étudiants doivent s'engager dans le programme; ils signent un contrat d'assiduité et de ponctualité. De plus, les inscriptions limitées, la liste d'attente pour les participants, la structure claire et le risque réel d'expulsion ont pour effet que les étudiants prennent leurs études et leur participation au sérieux. Deuxièmement, le programme offre un ensemble de services intégrés, parmi lesquels plusieurs services différents de conseillers afin de s'assurer que les étudiants ont à porter de la main les différents types de soutien dont ils ont besoin pour atteindre leurs objectifs. Le progrès des étudiants est aussi évalué fréquemment afin de vérifier s'ils atteignent les objectifs qu'ils se sont fixés. Les étudiants apprécient l'encadrement clair et ferme et le fait que le programme réponde à leurs besoins de façon holistique, que ce soit concernant le logement, la vie de la communauté, le service de garderie sur place ou le service de conseillers auquel ils peuvent avoir recours que ce soit

pour leur vie personnelle ou pour leur carrière professionnelle. Ces facteurs ont créé un environnement qui permet un taux de succès plus élevé (en termes d'obtention de diplômes, de diminution des abandons scolaires et de placement en milieu de travail) que celui de la commission scolaire locale. Des professionnels d'un grand nombre de communautés ont visité le CDFM-Village Huron, intéressés par la démarche intégrée relative à l'éducation aux adultes, à la formation et aux services établis dans le Village Huron.

Défis :

Tout comme pour de nombreux programmes, la suffisance des fonds demeure une difficulté importante. Récemment, une baisse de fonds a eu pour résultat l'arrêt du service d'autobus, ce qui a provoqué une baisse d'assiduité des étudiants qui habitent en dehors de la réserve. Par ailleurs, l'accueil d'étudiants en provenance d'autres communautés des Premières Nations soulève des questions administratives à savoir qui doit payer pour leur participation.

Alphabétisation et cours d'appoint à Betsiamites
Centre d'emploi et de ressources humaines
2, rue Ashini, B.P. 40
Betsiamites (Québec)
G0H 1B0
Tél. : (418) 567-2265
Téléc. : (418) 567-8560

Personnes ressources : Madame Angéline Canapé, Conseillère en information scolaire et professionnelle
Monsieur Alain Roch, Professeur en alphabétisation
Monsieur Ismael St-Onge, Professeur de français

Organisme hôte : Conseil de Bande des Betsiamites (voir adresse ci-dessus)

Population cible : Adultes en apprentissage de la communauté Betsiamites (Montagnais)

Mission et objectifs du programme :

Le programme à Betsiamites offre actuellement des cours d'appoint au primaire et au secondaire. Cela fait maintenant 15 ans que ces cours sont donnés dans la communauté. Les étudiants progressent à leur propre rythme et lorsqu'ils ont besoin d'explications, le professeur les aide seul à seul.

L'objectif principal du programme consiste à donner la possibilité aux étudiants adultes de terminer leurs études secondaires dans leur communauté. Le Conseil de Bande et son personnel ainsi que le Centre régional d'éducation aux adultes de la Commission scolaire de Manicouagan sont les concepteurs du programme et de sa politique. Officiellement, le Conseil de Bande s'occupe de l'immatriculation des étudiants et de la coordination du programme dans la communauté, mais le programme dépend des services et des heures d'enseignement fournis par le commission scolaire.

Aspects du programme :

- Les cours sont offerts au primaire (français et mathématiques), au secondaire (français, anglais et mathématiques) ainsi que pour des matières optionnelles, et ce en vue d'obtenir le diplôme d'études secondaires. Le programme d'études utilisé est celui du ministère de l'Éducation du Québec.

- Quinze adultes suivent actuellement des cours d'appoint au primaire. Les étudiants sont âgés en moyenne entre 20 et 30 ans, mais quelques-uns ont entre 40 et 45 ans. Environ la moitié sont des hommes et l'autre moitié des femmes.

- Il y a présentement 40 étudiants inscrits au cours d'appoint au secondaire, la plupart âgés entre 20 et 30 ans. Environ 70 % sont des femmes et 30 % des hommes.

- Le programme comprend quatre employés à temps complet : deux professeurs montagnais locaux enseignent le français et les mathématiques aux étudiants des cours d'appoint au niveau secondaire, et deux professeurs non-autochtones enseignent l'anglais et donnent des cours d'appoint au primaire.

- Le ministère de l'Éducation du Québec fournit les programmes d'études des cours d'appoint au primaire et au secondaire, ce qui n'est pas considéré comme étant réellement approprié aux besoins des étudiants autochtones.

- Les cours se donnent de 16 h 30 à 22 h, cinq jours par semaine durant l'année scolaire (de 30 à 32 semaines). Bien que le personnel du programme ait exprimé que ce dernier obtiendrait de meilleurs résultats s'il avait lieu pendant la journée, les salles de cours ne sont libres que lorsque les cours normaux sont terminés.

- La commission scolaire locale fournit la plupart des ressources du programme (professeurs, programme d'études, matériel). Le Conseil de Bande finance également une partie du programme à partir du fonds CAGL (conseil autochtone gestion locale) et du fonds de développement social. Il fournit les services d'un conseiller en information scolaire et professionnelle aux fins de coordination. De plus, il met à la disposition du programme des salles de classe dans l'école locale, une fois que les cours normaux sont terminés.

Dernières remarques :

Le personnel du programme croit que les étudiants apprécient généralement le programme parce qu'il leur permet de retourner aux études tout en demeurant dans leur communauté; ils se sentent plus confiants et en sécurité. Les étudiants s'inscrivent au programme pour diverses raisons. Comme le dit un membre du personnel du programme «certains étudiants du primaire termineront leurs études secondaires, mais d'autres non. Certains sont motivés uniquement par le désir d'apprendre à lire et à écrire et apprécient la possibilité de pouvoir pousser leurs études plus loin [...]», certains étudiants suivent le programme en fonction d'objectifs scolaires précis, tels qu'obtenir leur diplôme d'études secondaires. Cependant, d'autres sont motivés par l'aspect financier et social des cours aux adultes.

Défis :

D'après le personnel du programme, l'un des points faibles de ce dernier vient du fait que les cours ont lieu le soir, période à laquelle les salles de cours sont libres, et que cela entrave la vie sociale et familiale et mène à de haut taux d'absentéisme et d'abandon. Il n'est pas non plus facile de trouver les fonds nécessaires pour répondre aux besoins de la communauté dans le domaine de l'éducation. Par exemple, en ce qui a trait au cours d'alphabétisation, il y a une liste d'attente de 15 adultes en apprentissage et un professeur montagnais a été proposé pour leur enseigner. Cependant, il s'agit d'un jeune professeur avec très peu d'ancienneté à la commission scolaire et puisque celle-ci gère l'attribution des heures de cours, la communauté n'est pas en mesure de demander qu'on lui donne le contrat.

Betsiamites Pre-Secondary and Upgrading
Employment and Human Resources Centre
2, rue Ashini, CP 40
Betsiamites, Québec
G0H 1B0
Tel: (418) 567-2265
Fax: (418) 567-8560

Resource Contact: Ms. Angéline Canapé, Academic Information Counsellor

Host Organization: Betsiamites Band Council (same address as above)

Community Served: Adult learners from the Betsiamites (Montagnais) community

Program Mission & Objectives:

The program at Betsiamites currently offers both pre-secondary and secondary upgrading courses. Upgrading courses have been offered within the community for the past 15 years. Students progress at their own speeds, with one-on-one assistance from the teachers.

The main objective of the program is provide adult learners with the opportunity to complete their high-school leaving requirements within their community. The two main policy-making bodies for the program are the Band Council and its staff and the Regional Centre for Adult Education of the Manicougan School Board. The Band Council is officially responsible for enrolling students and coordinating the program within the community, but the program is reliant on the provision of services and teaching hours by the School Board.

Program Features:

- Courses offered in pre-secondary (French language and mathematics), secondary levels I through V (French, English and mathematics) as well as optional credits towards the high-school leaving certificate. Curricula used are those provided by Québec's Ministry of Education.

- There are currently 15 adults receiving upgrading at the pre-secondary level. Students are predominantly between 20 and 30 years of age, with a few learners of 40 to 45 years old. Approximately half the students are men and half are women.

- There are currently 40 students enrolled in secondary upgrading, most between the ages of 20 and 30. Approximately 70% are female and 30% male.

- The program has four full-time staff people: two local Montagnais teachers give instruction in French and mathematics to secondary-level learners; two non-Aboriginal teachers give instruction in English and pre-secondary upgrading.

- Both pre-secondary and secondary-level curricula are provided by the Québec Ministry of Education, which are not seen as particularly appropriate to the needs of Aboriginal learners.

- The program runs from 4:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., five days a week during the academic year (30 to 32 weeks). While program staff expressed that the program might be more effective if given during the daytime, classroom space is only available after regular classes finish.

- Most of the resources for the program (teachers' time, curricula, materials) are provided by the local School Board. The Band Council also contributes some funds through its Local Aboriginal Management funds and Social Development funds. It contributes the time of an Academic and Professional Information Counsellor to do some coordination. It also contributes classroom space in the local school, after the regular high-school classes are over.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Program staff feel that learners generally appreciate the program because it permits them to return to school while staying in their home community, which gives them a greater sense of confidence and security. Students are motivated to enrol in the program by a variety of factors. As one program staff-person stated, "while some pre-secondary students will eventually go on to finish their secondary studies, some will not. Some are just motivated by a personal desire to learn to read and write, and enjoy the possibilities open to them for future learning..." Some students have clear academic goals in mind, such as acquiring their high-school leaving certificate. Others are motivated by financial and social aspects of adult education courses.

According to program staff, it is considered a weakness of the program that it has to be given in the evenings when classroom space is available, thus overlapping with social and family time. This is seen to lead to high rates of absenteeism and dropping out. It is also seen as a challenge to access sufficient funds to meet all of the community's needs in the area of literacy training. In the area of basic literacy, for example, there is a waiting list of 15 adult learners, and a local Montagnais teacher has been identified to teach them. However, he is a young teacher, who has little seniority within the School Board. Since the School Board controls the allocation of teaching hours, the community is not in a position to demand that his services be contracted.

Gesgapegiag Academic Upgrading
Adult Education Centre
Maria Indian Reserve
PO Box 1280
Maria, Québec
G0C 1Y0
Tel: (418) 759-5562
Fax: (418) 759-5856

Resource Contact: Ms. Joan Bédard, English Teacher
Mr. Dennis Murray, Adult Education Coordinator
Mr. Clem Bernard, Director of Education

Host Organization: Eastern Shore School Board
PO Box 500
New Carlyle, Québec
G0C 1Z0

Community Served: Adult learners of the Mi'kmaq of Gesgapegiag community

Program Mission & Objectives:

The objective of the program is to qualify and prepare students for better access to and participation in the job market. The program has operated within the community for approximately ten years, and is administered by the Eastern Shore School Board, in consultation with the Mi'kmaq of Gesgapegiag Band Council staff. Teachers are provided by the School Board, but must first be accepted by education personnel of the Band Council. At the time that interviews were conducted in April, 1998, eight students were still enrolled in the program, down from 30 students who started in September. They receive one-on-one tutoring, as they progress at their own pace through the Québec Ministry of Education curriculum. Students are assessed and placed according to school board placement tests. This year, staff have attempted for the first time to set up formal meetings with individual students to establish their motivation, short-term and long-term goals for continuing education.

Program Features:

- The upgrading program offers the compulsory courses in English, French and math, as well as optional credits in history, sciences, geography, and physical education. Students also have access to computers with Internet access, which they can use for research assignments.

- The program has one full-time and one part-time instructor.

- All participants are Aboriginal, drawn from within the Gesgapegiag community.

- The courses are full-time, 25 hours per week for the full academic year of 30 to 32 weeks.

- Most students are between 18 and 23 years old, with slightly more than half the students being women and an average of eight years of formal education. Older students tend to go off-reserve to an adult education centre in a neighboring community.

- Though not done systematically, learners are often invited to participate in community workshops and community activities and vice-versa. The Band leadership and community in general are seen as highly supportive of the efforts of students and teachers.

- While using principally the SEAL (Secondary English Adult Learners) curriculum provided by the Québec Ministry of Education, the teacher has also experimented with the CORT (Lateral Thinking) and the Independent Paths to Learning (IPL) curriculum.

- As in the case of the program at Listuguj, nearly all of the resources used to run this program are provided by the Eastern Shore School Board. Some small amount is also provided out of Literacy Council funds administered by the School Board.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

What motivates students to attend this program is the greater degree of freedom and comfort they feel to pursue their education within their home community. The atmosphere is seen to be more relaxed and respectful of their individuality than in the non-Aboriginal high school. Students appreciate an environment in which they are not judged and are made responsible for their own success. A particularly successful addition to the basic curriculum was the use of the Internet for conducting research based on Aboriginal themes, and finding out more about indigenous groups from different parts of the Americas.

Along with many other efforts in this area, a main challenge facing the program is that of not having access to curriculum which is culturally appropriate and reflects the interests and values of Aboriginal learners. One teacher, who has many years of experience in working with Aboriginal students, both for the Kativik School Board and in the Northwest Territories, feels that better models for working with Aboriginal adult learners exist, but does not have the resources to significantly modify the existing curriculum. It was felt that there is a pressing need for an exchange of experiences, ideas and curricula between practitioners working in the area of Aboriginal literacy.

Centre de développment de la formation et
de la main-d'oeuvre Huron-Wendat (CDFM)
30, Rue de l'Ours
Village des Huron Wendake, Québec
G0A 4V0
Tel: (418) 842-6000
Fax: (418) 842-3076

Resource Contact: Mme. Julie Vincent, Training Counselor

Host Organization: Conseil de la Nation Huronne-Wendat

Community Served: Adult learners from a variety of French-speaking First Nations communities (Huron-Wendat, Montagnais, Atikamek)

Program Mission & Objectives:

The mission of the program at Village Huron, located on the outskirts of Québec City, is two-fold: to provide academic upgrading to students who desire to complete their secondary studies and pursue technical and college-level training, and also to provide basic literacy skills to those seeking immediate return to the job market. The CDFM offers both upgrading at all secondary levels (1 through 5), as well as the KIUGWE program, which is designed to provide basic literacy, job preparation and placement for students who are less prepared for or interested in pursuing academic work.

The decision-making body responsible for the program is the Centre de développement de la formation et de la main-d'oeuvre Huron-Wendat - CDFM (Huron-Wendat Training and Development Centre), in conjunction with the Band Council and the Jeune Lorette School Commission. The general upgrading program has been running within the community for five years, but the KIUGWE program is still in its first year as a pilot project.

This year, 60 students were registered in both components of the program: 18 initially registered in the KIUGWE program and 42 registered in the general upgrading program. Of the 18 students in the KIUGWE program, 11 were eventually brought to a level where they could join the academic upgrading, while the remaining seven were found job placements. In the upgrading component, students progress at their own speed, with one-on-one instruction available. In the KIUGWE program, most of the teaching is done in a small-group setting.

A great deal of emphasis is placed on the process of assessing students' levels and career goals. CDFM staff feel that their responsibility is to help learners set realistic goals for themselves. Learners are assessed in terms of their academic level, and also in terms of their

goals and level of commitment to complete the work involved in meeting the goals they have for themselves. Learners' progress is evaluated every two months, to see how well they are meeting their own objectives and if they need any additional support services.

Program Features:

- Upgrading courses provide instruction in French, English and mathematics, as well as optional credit courses. The KIUGWE program offers basic literacy training, job preparation, life skills, beginner-level computer training and three three-week on-the-job training periods.

- The program team consists of five full-time staff: two full-time literacy and job-prep teachers for the KIUGWE program, one full-time teacher for the upgrading, the training counsellor, and an animator of student life. The teaching staff is provided by the Jeune Lorette School Commission.

- Courses are offered five days a week, for the full academic year of 30 to 32 weeks and run from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

- Teaching methods combine the basic Ministry of Education curricula with an approach known as Compétences Fortes (Great Strengths) which helps to focus on learners' particular talents and skills.

- Learners are mainly between the ages of 25 and 30, with a few older and a few younger. Approximately half are female and half are male. All learners are of Aboriginal descent.

- Teaching staff are encouraged to supplement the basic curriculum to make it more suitable to the needs of Aboriginal learners. Learners are involved in community cultural events, and have gone on extra-curricular trips into the forest to learn traditional ways of subsistence. One teacher had given a great deal of time and effort to develop new methods to help Montagnais-speaking students overcome the particular difficulties they face in learning to read and write in the French language.

- Sixty to 70% of the cost of the program is assumed by the Jeune Lorette School Commission, which provides the teaching staff and curricula. The remainder is covered by funds provided by the Band Council for human resource development.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

By welcoming adult learners from different First Nations communities to participate, the CDFM Huron-Wendat has been able to enlarge the scope of the programs and services from what it could offer if it relied only on a local clientele. Their approach is found to work well for students because of several key factors. First, the program demands that students commit themselves, through the signing of a contract, to regular attendance and punctuality. Limited enrolment, a waiting list of participants, a clear structure and the real risk of expulsion mean that students take their course work and participation very seriously. Secondly, the program provides an integrated set of services, with a variety of types of counselling, to ensure that learners have the different types of support they need to meet their goals. Students' progress is also frequently evaluated to ensure that they are meeting the goals they have set for themselves.

Learners appreciate working within a clear and firm structure, and the sense that the program deals holistically with their needs – from housing, to community life, to on-site day care, to personal and career counselling. These factors have created an environment which has produced higher rates of success (in terms of graduation, low drop-out rate and job placement) than those of the local school board. The CDFM-Village Huron has received visits of professionals from many communities who are interested in the integrated approach to adult education, training, and services that has been established at the Village Huron.

As with many programs, adequate funding remains a major challenge. A recent short-fall of funding meant that bus service to the program had to be cut, which brought a drop in attendance by learners living off-reserve. Also, the practice of welcoming learners from other First Nations communities raises administrative questions as to who pays for their participation.

Adult Education Program
Kativik School Board
2555 Oxford
Montréal, Québec
H4A 2X6
Tel: (514) 482-8220
Fax: (514) 369-2636

Resource Contact: Ms. Franca Lunens, Pedagogical Counsellor
Ms. Sonia Venne, Adult Educator
Mr. Christopher Mount, Adult Educator
Ms. Joanne Dero, Adult Educator

Host Organization: Kativik School Board (KSB)

Community Served: Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population of Nunavik.

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Kativik School Board is an Aboriginal-managed education institution, created under the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement, mandated to meet the needs of all learners in the far north of Québec, from elementary school through to adult education. General policy and decision-making is the responsibility of an Inuit Board of Directors. To meet the needs of adult learners, KSB has established Adult Education Centres in seven centres: Kuujjuaq, Salluit, Povungnituk, Inukjuaq, Kangiqsujuaq, Kuujjuaraapik and Aqulivik. These centres have an open-door policy, and accept any adult learner at any level: from basic literacy to the high-school leaving diploma, as well as vocational programs. As of September 1998, there were 192 adult learners registered for pre-secondary and secondary upgrading.

The centres are staffed by a combination of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal professionals. According to the Adult Educators interviewed, the goal of their work is to provide learners with the skills, confidence and sense of autonomy either to find employment, or to go on to further academic or vocational programs. KSB also provides a basic adult education program to Inuit inmates at the St. Jerome Penitentiary.

According to the Pedagogical Counsellor, KSB has experimented with many methods of literacy promotion in Inuit communities, including family literacy projects, television and radio vignettes and children's books. But the adult education centre forms the basis of its

approach and seems to work best, by providing direct teaching services to community members. In the case of Nunavik, Inuttitut, rather than English or French is the first language of many learners. Literacy and language skills are intertwined, and their acquisition demands a great deal of individual time and attention from Educators, using a culturally adapted and appropriate curriculum. Learners are assessed using KSB's own placement tests, which, like its curriculum, have been adapted to reflect the Northern and Inuit context and culture. Guided by KSB curriculum, Educators have a great latitude to involve learners in community activities, field trips and outings.

Program Features:

- The scope of KSB's adult education services is large: its Adult Educators provide basic literacy and upgrading to Grade 11 (and a high-school diploma) in both English and French. In addition, a wide range of optional subjects are offered, in job preparation, Inuttitut language, history, biology, physics and computer science, among others.

- KSB's literacy and upgrading program currently has 15 full-time staff. While Adult Educators generally come from the South, those interviewed demonstrated a high degree of sensitivity to the Inuit culture and tradition, and a willingness to adapt curriculum and teaching methods to the needs of learners. KSB's program for Inuit inmates at the St. Jerome Penitentiary also demands a great sensitivity to specific cultural and personal issues faced by individuals removed from their families and communities.

- Depending on the level of the learner, the program ranges from a half day (for basic literacy students) to five hours a day, five days a week, for the full academic year.

- Depending on the Centre, almost all learners are Inuit, ranging in age from 18 to 55, with slightly more women learners than men. In the case of the KSB program for Inuit inmates at the St. Jerome Penitentiary, all learners are men.

- KSB is funded by Québec's Ministry of Education.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

According to the educators interviewed, younger adults tend to enrol out of a desire to improve their employment possibilities, older learners also enjoy being in a learning environment and improving their reading and writing skills. The Adult Education Centres run by the KSB provide a safe and sociable environment for learners of all ages, which is particularly valued during the long winter months.

The Educators interviewed all expressed that the success of their teaching depended on the strong curricular and moral support they receive from the KSB, as well as a personal attitude of openness to learning from and about Inuit culture: "There are some things that our students know which we can learn and others that we know and they can learn. You have to be willing to learn, yourself. When my students took me out on the ice, it was funny for them to see how little I knew about how to survive in their environment. It was good for them and for me when they were given the chance to teach me something and share their knowledge and expertise."

The challenge to the Educators is one shared with many other teachers in a classroom setting: how to give adequate time and attention to learners at very different levels. Learners with low literacy skills require the maximum time and assistance from Educators, while those who are more advanced also want to progress through their subjects as rapidly as possible.

Choices
Kitigan Zibi Education Council
Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation
Maniwaki, Québec
J9E 3B1
Tel: (819) 449-2825
Fax: (819) 449-5570

Resource Contact: Gilbert Whiteduck, Director of Education

Host Organization: Kitigan Zibi Education Council

Communities Served: Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation

Program Mission & Objectives:

In its very name, Choices - An Alternative in Education, is the mandate of this literacy program serving the members of the Anishinabeg First Nation Community. It is a reflection of the vision and commitment of the program itself as it offers to adults opportunities to enhance their learning skills, self-image, and to reacquaint themselves with the lifelong process of learning and education. It was designed with the learners in mind, without the formal structures and rules of the conventional education system. It is effective because it is aligned with the culture of the people; it is innovative because it is affiliated with the degree-granting Algonquin College of Ottawa.

The five-year-old program focuses on providing the skills needed to pursue college-level studies, with particular emphasis on Level 2 through high-school equivalency. In upper levels, biology, physics and chemistry are offered: program graduates may then access programs offered at Algonquin College. Opportunities in computer training, Algonquin language and career counselling are also available. One of its most innovative projects is the co-op program which allows learners to obtain valuable work experience in the field related to their studies.

The program is offered to all registered members of Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation who are 16 years of age and older, and who have been out of school for at least six months. All components of the program – curriculum, policy-making, and governance – are supervised by the Kitigan Zibi Education Council.

Program Features:

- There are two full-time instructors working with the students.
- Currently, there are 24 learners enrolled in Choices. All are Aboriginal; there is an equal gender split, and most learners are in their twenties.

- All upgrading courses are accredited with ministerial standards. While most consist of Level 2 to 3 in preparation for GED testing, many courses are directly preparatory for further programs of study offered through Algonquin College.

- Teaching methodology is an effective combination of small-scale classroom learning and individual module studies, which allow students to progress at their own pace. These learning modules are provided by the community college, and form the basis of the curriculum. Course and module offerings include Communications (mainly English), mathematics, and general science. An Aboriginal component forms part of the Communications module, and has proven to be an effective learning and discussion tool.

- The program operates daily, from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. during the traditional school year. Learners whose daily attendance exceeds three hours receive a modest training allowance as incentive to pursue the program.

- All of the program's funding is provided by the Kitigan Zibi Education Council, and is based on negotiated, regional bilateral agreements with the federal government.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

> *"These institutions killed the soul of the Aboriginal people, they destroyed their sense of identity. When that happens, you get angry both at yourself and others. You fill the void with loathing and its companions – alcohol and all the abuses. You punish yourself for what they took away from you!"*

Choices offers just that – viable alternatives to a mainstream and, for many members of Maniwaki's Aboriginal community, ineffectual education system. Time and again, Aboriginal learners have been defeated by a conventional curriculum. Choices gives the learners an opportunity to acquire literacy and upgrading skills in a safe, culturally- appropriate environment. It is an environment that is flexible and adaptable to the needs and cycles of its students' lives. Furthermore, the community of Kitigan Zibi First Nation has placed an increasing emphasis on economic development of the community and on providing standard entry-level job qualifications for all its members.

Perhaps its most attractive feature is its solid affiliation with the degree-granting Algonquin College. This link is an important motivation for students who see the potential in upgrading, but need the security of a familiar environment. The partnership, and the co-op program in particular, offer tangible and valuable learning experience. In addition, Gilbert Whiteduck himself maintains numerous links to national and provincial networks as well as with the Maniwaki Literacy Council. Priorities he has identified for the Choices program include funding and the availability of permanent day-care facilities, for learners who are parents.

Listuguj Basic Literacy and Upgrading
Adult Education Centre
1 Riverside West
PO Box 298
Listuguj (Restigouche), Québec
G0C 2R0
Tel: (418) 788-3080
Fax: (418) 788-2058

Resource Contact: Mr. Owen Mailloux, Coordinator of Adult Education, Listuguj
Ms. Gail Craswel, Basic Literacy and English Teacher
Ms. Theresa Mitchell, Post-Secondary Officer,
Listuguj Band Council

Host Organization: Listuguj Band Council/Eastern Shore School Board

Community Served: Clientele drawn from adult members of Listiguj (Mi'kmaq) community

Program Mission & Objectives:

There are currently two dimensions to literacy work within the adult education services offered by the Eastern Shore School Board in Listuguj. The basic literacy component has been operating since September, 1997, and currently provides one-on-one tutoring to four adults. Its objective is to provide a safe and non-threatening environment for adults to gain basic literacy skills, and to open doors to whatever these students would like to learn afterwards. It is intended to provide adult learners with a sense of confidence, satisfaction and self-esteem that is derived from the ability to read.

The upgrading component has been operational within the community for over 20 years, and currently services approximately 25 students. Its objective is to provide adult learners with a safe environment, and materials and instruction they need to meet the high-school leaving requirements. In this component, students' capabilities and level are determined according to the school board's placement tests, but the teacher is quite free to move students from level to level, as she sees fit. Although the Eastern Shore School Board is responsible for human, curricular and other resources of the program, policy regarding elective subjects is made in consultation with the Listuguj Mi'kmaq First Nations Council and its staff.

Program Features:

- In both the basic literacy and upgrading components, learners progress at their own speed, with one-on-one assistance from the teachers.

- Basic literacy program offers private teaching three hours per week, per student. Each student establishes one-on-one meetings with the instructor, and follows the Laubach method of adult literacy training.

- Upgrading students use the SOFAD materials provided by the Québec Ministry of Education. Once a week, they receive group instruction in English grammar and writing skills. Courses are offered in English, French and mathematics, as well as a wide range of optional credit courses, including life skills, job preparation, computer training, and other courses on demand.

- Aboriginal themes or content are integrated on an ad hoc basis.

- Four part-time instructors in English, French, math/computing, and life skills.

- Programs are open to non-Aboriginal students, but almost all current students are Aboriginal, drawn from within the Listuguj Mi'kmaq community.

- Upgrading courses consist of nine hours each per week for 30 weeks.

- In the basic literacy component, students' ages are between 30 and 58 years with few years of formal schooling. In the upgrading component, about half of the students are between 24 and 39 years of age, with an average of eight years of formal schooling. Numbers of men and women participants are approximately equal.

- Nearly all resources (classroom rentals, human and curricular resources) required to run this program are provided through the Eastern Shore School Board.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

One of the chief strengths of this program is its ability to identify and put existing resources to use on behalf of its learners and the community. Resources from the local school board have been successfully used in unconventional ways to meet learners' needs. For instance, while basic literacy courses normally demand a large class size (15 students or more) the Board agreed to pay an honorarium to the instructor so that four students could receive individual tutoring. While in upgrading, students are generally motivated by a desire to get their high-school leaving certification. In basic literacy, students are more often motivated by a desire to unlock the mysteries of the writing which surrounds them. They appreciate the intimacy, closeness and confidentiality of the approach and the sensitivity and

commitment of the instructor. An important part of the approach of the instructor in the area of basic literacy is to put students at ease by taking them back to the most basic elements of reading (letters and phonics), which permits a sense of early success and solidifies fundamental skills.

In 1997/98, the basic literacy program was at the pilot-project stage and knowledge of the course spread through word of mouth. All students have expressed that they would like more hours of tutoring per week. It is hoped that in 1998/99, funding from the school board will be increased so that more learners are served with more hours of tutoring each.

In the area of upgrading, a chief challenge is the poor quality and low relevance of SOFAD (Adult Education) curriculum provided by the Ministry. This is seen as an issue generally, for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, but a particularly crucial one for maintaining interest of Aboriginal learners. The instructor, however, is responsive to the needs of the students. She has the freedom to modify and add to the materials and has made efforts to modify the existing curriculum to the interests of her students.

Mashteuiatsh Academic Upgrading
École Kassinu Mamu
1711 rue Amishk
Mashteuiatsh, Québec
G0W 2H0
Tel: (418) 275-2473
Fax: (418) 275-6212

Resource Contact: Mme. Louise Nepton, Responsable des services éducatifs
Responsable principal de l'école Amishk

Host Organization: Conseil des Montagnais du Lac-Saint-Jean

Community Served: Adult learners from the Mashteuiatsh (Montagnais) community.

Program Mission & Objectives:

The program at Mashteuiatsch provides academic upgrading at the levels of Secondary 1 through 5 to adult learners from within the community. The mission of the program at Mashteuiatsh is to develop a sense of pride and self-esteem in adult learners from within the community, through achieving the objectives of increased job-readiness and employability and preparing students to achieve their academic and professional goals. Academic upgrading services have been provided within the community for over ten years. There are normally about 60 students who pass through the program each year.

Students progress at their own speed, with one-on-one assistance from teachers where sought. The Band's own Education Services staff are increasingly attempting to get involved with counselling and monitoring of students progress, since in the past, students were often unaware of where they stood in terms of their formal educational requirements and success rates were low. The Band Council and its Education Services staff collaborate with the local school board, which administers the program, by providing some coordination and classroom space.

Program Features:

- Learners receive upgrading in the core subjects of French and mathematics, as well as optional courses and job training.
- The program is offered daily from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.. Though intended to run the full academic year, students regularly leave the course and by March or April the program is forced to close. Highly motivated learners may continue after the closing date by going to the (non-Aboriginal) Adult Education Centre in Roberval.
- Students are generally between the ages of 20 and 30.

- A full-time French teacher and a full-time math teacher are provided by the School Board, who use curricula provided by the Québec Ministry of Education. There is also an Academic and Professional Information Officer employed by the Band Council, whose responsibilities are divided among local and off-reserve secondary, post-secondary and adult learners.

- All learners are Aboriginal (Montagnais) students from the community, with an average of approximately seven years of formal education.

- The operating budget comes mainly from the school board, which provides the human resources and materials. The Band Council provides the physical space as well as some coordination in setting up the classes and some supervision.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

According to program staff, while some students are genuinely motivated by a desire to pursue their secondary studies in the hope of future professional training, others may enrol for the economic incentive offered in the form of an additional amount to their social assistance or for the sociable environment. Learners appreciate the opportunity to study within the community, the occasional visit from the Chief, and involvement in other cultural activities. A particular benefit of offering the upgrading program within the community is the opportunity to integrate other services (social services, treatment services and counselling) to holistically meet the needs of adult learners. For the last two years Education Services of the Band have attempted to focus on the process and environment for learning, rather than results themselves, by trying to be aware of the needs of the whole person and not just their academic profile.

The two main challenges for the program in Mashteuiatsh, are adequacy of funding and a curriculum and teaching methods appropriate to Montagnais students. While in years past, Education Services has run a literacy (pre-secondary) program, this year it was impossible to do so because the local school board requires that 13 students register before it will assign a teacher to the course. According to program staff, this number is a prohibitive requirement in what is a very small community.

In terms of teaching and curriculum, it is seen as a weakness of the program that it is not sufficiently tailored to the needs of the Montagnais community. Specifically, Education Services staff expressed frustration with the attitudes of teaching staff assigned by the school board. For instance, it is not unusual for both school children and adult learners to leave the community and pursue traditional activities in the forest at certain times of the year. School board staff is seen to discourage legitimate, traditional ways of life of learners, while taking the attitude that inappropriate behaviours, such as tardiness and absenteeism are "normal for Aboriginal people". According to those interviewed, such attitudes do not to promote a positive self-image or learning environment, and may account, in part, for the high drop-out rates which are a recurrent problem for the program.

Sabtuan Adult Education
Cree School Board
216 Umisk Street
Mistissini, Québec
G0W 1C0
Tel: (418) 923-3347
Fax: (418) 923-2270

Resource Contact: Mr. Mathew Iserhoff, Pedagogical Counsellor
Mr. Charles Matoush, Director of Adult Education Services

Host Organization: Cree School Board (CSB)

Community Served: Adult learners from nine Cree communities

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Cree School Board was created under the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement in 1978 to provide education services from elementary through to the high-school leaving diploma in nine Cree communities. CSB also provides a wide range of services to adult learners in their communities, from basic literacy to the completion of their high-school leaving requirements, as well as vocational and college-preparation courses. It is overseen by Cree School Commissioners, whose members are elected or appointed from each of the nine communities. According to the Pedagogical Counsellor working in Mistissini, the purpose of the literacy courses offered is "to work with those with lower levels of literacy to help them improve their skills and enjoy coming to school and learning". Learners are offered basic reading and writing skills in English, as well as Cree syllabics at the basic, intermediate and advanced levels. "Cree syllabics are good for those, from all walks of life, who want to read and write in their language." Learners in all components of the program are assessed on the basis of CSB's placement tests, their learning objectives and in consultation with both the instructor and Pedagogical Counsellor. On the basis of this assessment, they will either attend a literacy program, a Cree syllabics program, pre-secondary or secondary upgrading program.

Program Features:

- The services offered by CSB include basic literacy, Cree language (syllabics at all levels), academic upgrading (to high-school leaving), college preparation and a range of vocational courses such as heavy machinery, professional cooking, home care, and restaurant services.

- In the Adult Education Centre at Mistissini, at the literacy level, there is a maximum of 15 learners per class, who get a combination of group and one-on-

one instruction. For all adult education programs offered at the Centre, there are four full-time and two part-time teaching staff to 90 adult learners.

- Literacy and Cree syllabics courses consist of six hours a week from September to April. Upgrading and vocational programs are full-time, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for the full academic year.

- Although the Centre at Mistissini also serves non-Aboriginal learners, it is estimated that approximately 98% of current learners are Cree, ranging in age from 16 to 50 years old. Slightly more than half of learners are women.

- Adult educators are given a wide latitude to adapt CSB curriculum to the interests and culture of Cree learners.

- The CSB is funded by both Québec's Ministry of Education (MEQ) and the federal government.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

The CSB adult education centres provide an open and welcoming environment to adult learners of all levels. Distance to the program is generally not an issue, as services are available in each community. According to the Pedagogical Counsellor interviewed, adult learners come to the Centre for a variety of reasons. "Some literacy students talk about having trouble reading their mail, wanting to improve their reading and writing skills. Upgrading students want to get the skills they need to get a job. They want to increase the opportunities open to them." Literacy learners in particular, are motivated by the progress they see. "It takes them a long time to feel some success, but our instructor is a good motivator. At the end of the year, they are amazed that they can read and write."

A main challenge faced by teaching staff is to find and develop curriculum appropriate to Cree adult learners. Curricula used currently are either adapted from the MEQ's regular adult education materials or, in the case of Cree syllabics, taken from CSB's curriculum designed for children and adolescents. MEQ materials tend not to integrate issues and themes of specific interest to Aboriginal learners. On the other hand, CSB curriculum developed for younger learners is not always appropriate for adults. Hence, a major challenge facing the CSB is to find the resources needed to develop culturally-appropriate adult-centered materials to support the work of adult educators.

Space and staffing are also an issue. Both teachers and places to house them are in short supply. In some communities there is a waiting list for housing, and it is difficult to find room for teachers from the south or other Cree communities. Classroom space is also limited, as CSB's regular-sector classes get priority.

Temiscaming Upgrading Services
Algonquin Nations Programs and Services Secretariat
Human Resources Development Section
Temiscaming Reserve
PO Box 367
Notre-Dame-du-Nord, Québec
J0Z 3B0
Tel: (819) 723-2019
Fax: (819) 723-2345

Resource Contact: Ms. Thérèse Renault – Employment Counsellor, Human Resources Development

Host Organization: Algonquin Nation Programs and Services Secretariat (ANPSS)

Community Served: Adult learners from the Temiscaming (Algonquin) community.

Program Mission and Objectives:

The main objective of the program is to render the job market accessible to adult learners from the community and to do what is required, on an individual basis, to increase employability. For community members to benefit from employment opportunities, they must be trained and competent to assume available positions, which often require a minimum of a high-school leaving certificate. The program endeavours to provide an academic and practical basis for the transition to employment.

While upgrading courses have been offered within the community for many years, in 1997 the Tribal Council (through the ANPSS) took over their administration from the federal government's Human Resources Development Centre. The ANPSS (representing the Algonquin communities of Temiscaming, Wolf Lake and Barrier Lake) and its Human Resources section now oversees the program. A committee is currently being created which will bring together diverse staff from Human Resources, Social Services and Education, to help coordinate and improve efforts in the area of adult education.

In 1997/98, there were 15 students registered in all components of the program, who progress at their own speed and receive one-on-one instruction from teachers where necessary. A great deal of importance is placed on the process of assessing learners' capabilities and goals: in addition to Ministry of Education placement tests, program staff meet individually with each student to help them define their career goals and to develop a personalized program to help them achieve these goals, in terms of academic work, job preparation and job placement.

Program Features:

- Courses are offered at both the pre-secondary level, as well as secondary upgrading at Levels 1 through 5. Pre-secondary courses focus on basic reading, writing and math skills. Upgrading courses offer English, French, mathematics, optional credits at all secondary levels, and in job preparation, computing, clerical, mechanical and other technical and professional subjects.

- Courses were offered over 25 hours a week, five days a week, for 15 to 16 weeks. This year, courses ran from September to the end of February.

- Approximately 60% of the learners are female and 40% are male.

- This year, there was one full-time teacher and one part-time assistant, both provided by the local school board, as well as the services of an Employment Counsellor, provided by the ANPSS. The local Director of Education is also active in assessing and motivating adult learners.

- All students are of Aboriginal descent, with a wide age-range of 17 to 40 years old.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

The most important factor motivating students to enrol and remain in the program is the success of others who have passed through it to find employment. Even students who drop out, often return to the program because they recognize that they will not get the jobs available if they do not possess the required skills and certification. They like the fact that they are able to acquire these within their home community, and also in the English language, which is a first language for many learners.

One of the main points emphasized by program staff is the importance of identifying and working towards the students' own career objectives. Active steps are taken to help encourage and motivate students, and to tailor the program to their individual, work-related goals. The local Director of Education plays an active role in bringing students to meet successful community members who have passed through the same steps as adult learners. As many learners are not focused on academic goals, rather they may require job experience, the program gives them skills in C.V. writing and interviewing and provides job placements, both within and outside the community.

The main challenge facing the program is that of funding. This year, for example, funds available through both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal (school board) sources were inadequate to finish the academic year. Students who are on the verge of finishing their Secondary 5 requirements find themselves having to wait from February until September to meet these requirements.

Regional Overview
Québec

Consultants covered the Québec Region in two ways. In south, visits were made to six Aboriginal communities with adult literacy and up-grading programs. In the north, where adult educational services are provided by two large Aboriginal school boards, telephone and face-to-face interviews were carried out with staff of the Cree School Board and Kativik School Board located in Montreal.

In general, adult educators and program coordinators in Québec regretted the low level of priority given to the basic education of adult both within and outside the Aboriginal community. In the South, funding may be made available for literacy activities within the community from the Regional Bilateral Agreements. However, there is a great deal of competition for these resources and even when projects receive funding, it is generally given on a year-to-year basis. It is seen as extremely difficult to build a program based on highly uncertain and short-term funding mechanisms.

For this reason, there is a need to rely more heavily on local school boards which are mandated by the Québec Government to provide basic literacy and academic up-grading services. The degree of cooperation between Aboriginal coordinators and the local school board may vary, depending on the level of flexibility, cooperation and sensitivity to community needs demonstrated by school boards staff. Some program coordinators related to us that there were difficulties encountered in meeting the needs of adult learners due to:

- a sense of competition between service providers: In areas where non-Aboriginal adult education centers exist, it may be perceived as unnecessary duplication to offer the same or similar courses both on- and off-reserve, despite the fact that some Aboriginal learners often will get help if it means going off-reserve.

- issues of control: Aboriginal coordinators trying to organize adult literacy and up-grading initiatives in their communities sometimes experience frustration at their lack of control over and input into teaching materials, selection of instructors, teaching hours, class size, course calendar, power to accredit learners and many other factors. These decisions are, in some cases, imposed by the local school board, without a high degree of understanding or appreciation of Aboriginal cultures, traditions, calendars or the particular learning needs of Aboriginal learners.

In Northern Québec, two large Aboriginal educational institutions, created under the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement, are mandated to respond to the literacy and up-grading needs of adult learners: the Cree School Board and the Inuit-managed Katavik School. Both the Cree School Board and the Katavik School Board deliver adult education services to many communities in their territories, by creating local learning centers, developing and adapting curriculum and assessment methods and placing adult educators. Fully recognized as school boards, they have legitimacy to accredit learners and issue diplomas, and are funded directly by Québec's Ministry of Education.

Akwesasne Literacy Program (ALC)
Adult Education Centre
Mohawk Council of Akwesasne
PO Box 597
Cornwall, Ontario
K6H 5T3
Tel: (613) 575-2754
Fax: (613) 575-1478

Resource Contact: Jackie Mitchell, Coordinator

Host Organization: Adult Education Centre, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne

Communities Served: First Nation Community of Akwesasne
(including the federal, provincial and state jurisdictions
of Ontario, Quebec, and New York)

Program Mission & Objectives:

As part of the comprehensive and well-supported Adult Education Centre, the Akwesasne Literacy Centre (ALC) offers basic literacy training designed to upgrade skills so that learners can proceed to the variety of courses available at the Centre. The Centre itself offers courses in upgrading, vocational training, life and work skills, a 20-week job-preparation placement as well as the basic literacy program.

Begun in 1995, the ALC program is a relatively new initiative. The philosophy of the program, according to coordinator Jackie Mitchell, is to encourage the learner in his or her own chosen goals. "We do not give them the moon when all they want to do for now is to stand on a stump. We will help them get there, and their self-confidence will get them to the moon if that is where they want to go. We recognize that they are the learners; that they must move at their own pace. We will lose them if they are pressured or pushed."

Using a combination of tutoring and group work, the ALC seeks to encourage its students in learning and self-confidence. Initial assessments are made upon intake, although these are fairly casual. Formal assessments of the learner's abilities and goals are done once he or she is comfortably settled into the program.

The literacy program is very much a part of the integrated approach to adult learning at Akwesasne. Indeed both the Akwesasne Literacy Centre and the Adult Education Centre itself very much reflect the community's commitment to lifelong learning. All programs are generously supported by the Council and community. All aspects of policy support, long-term planning and governance are offered by the Adult Education Committee of the Mohawk Council.

Program Features:

- While Jackie is the only full-time coordinator for the ALC program, there are also some part-time staff members. In addition, the program has access to the comprehensive resources of the Adult Education Centre itself. Teachers, counsellors and administrative services are provided through the Centre.

- Nearly 75% of the 22 learners currently enrolled in the ALC program are male. Interestingly, half are in their 20s, while the other half are in the 45 to 60 year range. The average literacy competence is about Grade 5 or 6. All are Aboriginal.

- The Adult Education Centre operates full-time, throughout the year. This is true too of the ALC program itself; Jackie Mitchell understands that many learners like to use the Centre full-time, while some prefer to work at home and drop in at the Centre periodically. Therefore, she offers a very flexible schedule to accommodate them. She typically puts in very long hours, and even makes house calls to help learners as they study at home.

- Methodology consists of individualized tutoring supplemented with Laubach Kits and New Press Readers – both are very effective learning tools for basic literacy programs. In addition, learners gather for group work once or twice a week to discuss problems and progress. Jackie notes that there is a need to develop or enhance the existing Aboriginal curriculum, particularly for Elders who are in the program. Most Elders prefer to use English rather than Mohawk materials simply because Aboriginal materials lack cultural relevance for them.

- As a stepping stone to programs offered in the Adult Education Centre, the ALC basic program is not an accredited program. It does have affiliations with the Alternative School in Cornwall, and there has been some discussion about obtaining accreditation for the ALC.

- Half of the ALC's funding comes from the Ontario MET. The other 50% comes directly from the Mohawk Council. In the past, NLS funding has been available and used for outreach and recruitment.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Especially important for students in the ALC is a safe environment. Jackie cites this as one of the most important concerns of the program. And maintaining learner motivation is intimately linked with environment. "The learners realize that they are in for the long haul... that it will take a long time for them to complete their work." Also problematic for the learners is the stigmatism of literacy. Many are embarrassed by the fact and some withdraw from the program. On this, Jackie makes an interesting observation. "When we were in a separate trailer, there were many more who participated with us. When we moved into the big Adult Education Centre and mixed with learners in other programs, there was a noticeable drop-off in learners." Support for these learners is crucial to their success. Related programs offered through the Adult Education Centre often assist in maintaining motivation. In fact, some learners in ALC have relatives enrolled in the advanced upgrading components. This frequently encourages learners to stick with the program.

Anishnawbe Skills Development Program (ASDP)
Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre
401 North Cumberland Street
Thunder Bay, Ontario
P7A 4P7
Tel: (807) 345-5840
Fax: (807) 345-8945

Resource Contact: Sharon Bannon

Host Organization: Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre

Community Served: Thunder Bay

Program Mission & Objectives:

The goal of the Anishnawbe Skills Development program is, "to provide opportunities for Native adults and youth to learn, acquire and develop new skills by offering a comfortable learning environment with need-specific curriculum, in order for them to integrate these opportunities with jobs, job training and educational experiences, thereby empowering them with more changes to better their situation in society".

Thunder Bay has an Aboriginal population of approximately 10,000, which works out to about 9% of the total population. The ASDP has a large office at the front of the Friendship Centre, where intake and assessment occurs, and administrative work is done. The literacy coordinator reports to the Executive Director, who meets monthly with the Friendship Centre Board of Directors to update them on the Centre's activities.

Program Features:

- The program has one full-time staff-person, and a part-time assistant, though Sharon has been able to secure project staff through National Literacy Secretariat grants, and mid-year funding from the Ministry of Education and Training.

- There are usually 30 students enrolled in the program, of which an average of 20 attend from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. almost daily – their participation in the program is recognized by Social Assistance, so the coordinator is very strict about attendance and participation in learning activities.

- There were over 80 learners over the past fiscal year, with a fairly even split between male and female, most of whom are in their late 20s or early 30s.

- Learners are given bus fare towards the end of each day, and lunch tickets if they have volunteered at the Centre's Bingo; otherwise, the lunch is $5 (a terrific price for a hot meal, which sometimes includes bannock).

- Because of the high volume of students participating in the program, intake of new students is done on Mondays only.

- Assessment is done through a series of language, math and writing exercises devised by the literacy coordinator, as well as an informal discussion to ascertain any issues that may impact on regular attendance – transportation, day care, abuse, addictions.

- Some of the contact hours deal with Independent Learning Centre courses, and support work for them.

- The rest of the contact hours include learning activities devised by the program staff – debates on contemporary issues, for which there is a follow-up writing assignment, traditional Aboriginal activities such as going on sweats, or going camping.

- Most of the students have attended Confederation College or the Balmoral Centre, but needed the supportive environment of the Friendship Centre to keep at and/or complete their credits.

- Program staff would like to participate in Thunder Bay inter-agency meetings, but often have to prioritize student activities.

- The program offers two six-week Ojibway courses (out of the core grant).

- There is a strong focus on the students' cultural/spiritual growth, which contributes to improvement in a sense of self.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

The literacy coordinator is very stretched, and very well trained (she herself is both a qualified teacher and life-skills coach). In addition, Sharon makes the Aboriginal spiritual traditions the focus of her life. In doing so, she is able to pass on the teachings to the learners – either through planned activities, or through informal chats on their progress. In fact, this program is unique in that the learners earn credit hours for participating in the Friendship Centre's traditional activities, such as sweats. Sharon cites discipline and love for the students as the primary ingredients for the success of the program.

When Sharon is able to secure additional staff, every effort is made to ensure that they are Aboriginal, so as to provide positive role models for the learners, and to promote self-determination. One only has to feel the positive energy in the room when learners are working, or participating in a function, such as the Native Literacy Awareness Gathering, to know that the learners are making great strides in their academic work, and their personal lives, through participation in this program.

Basic Education Starts Today (BEST) Program
Can-Am Indian Friendship Centre
2109 Ottawa Avenue
Windsor, Ontario
N8Y 1R8
Tel: (519) 258-8954
Fax: (519) 258-3795

Resource Contact: Claire Byrne, Literacy Coordinator

Host Organization: Can-Am Indian Friendship Centre

Communities Served: Adult Native community of Windsor area

Program Mission & Objectives:

The BEST Program was established in February 1988 in response to an expressed need in the Windsor Aboriginal community. Its main purpose is to design and deliver an Aboriginal adult education/upgrading program using a culturally-appropriate curriculum. BEST puts the needs of the adult learner first by offering one-on-one tutoring as well as small-group sessions for those who wish to improve their reading, writing, numeracy, and other academic skills. In addition, the program offers a referral service for students whose needs cannot be met within its mandate.

The program offers a variety of learning activities, many of which are directly related to life skills and job preparation. In addition to the fundamentals of reading, writing and arithmetic, students can learn about résumé writing, banking and budgeting, Internet and computer literacy. The goal here is to relate literacy with economic upgrading, and this appears to be an effective tactic.

Most students learn about the program through word of mouth. Admission is based on an informal assessment made by Claire, and goals are set by the student after consultation with her. Learners must be 16 years of age or older to be eligible for the program.

Tutorials are the mainstay of the program. Tutors are given an orientation session before they are matched with learners. The coordinator monitors their progress by means of reporting forms (handed in regularly by each tutor) and through occasional meetings.

Program Features:

- Claire Byrne is the only full-time facilitator on staff. She relies on the work of volunteers (currently there are ten) to assist in tutoring and teaching. A large part of Claire's work involves coordinating tutors with learners, and overseeing the curriculum.

- Enrolment ranges from 50 to 70 learners over the course of the year. Of these, 80 % are Aboriginal adults, most aged between 25 to 44 years. The male-female ratio is equal.

- Methodology consists primarily of individual tutoring, self-teaching, along with a certain amount of group work. The curriculum is informal and intended to meet the immediate needs of each client.

- The basic literacy component of the program meets as a group once a week (Wednesday evenings), and then work in individual tutorial sessions throughout the week.

- Fully 90% of the Centre's literacy budget comes from the Ministry of Education. The balance is provided in both funds and services by the Friendship Centre itself.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

After having experienced the formal education system, many learners in the BEST Program have discovered that they thrive in the informal environment of the Centre. Most want to improve their reading skills for economic reasons. They are prepared to work hard to get their credits but need the security of a supportive, familiar, Aboriginal environment.

In the list of priorities, Claire cites motivation of learners, and the turnover rate in particular as one of the most significant. She notes with some frustration that many learners have come within sight of completing their programs only to drop out before receiving their credit. To address the problem, she has focused the curriculum on economic issues with a certain Aboriginal perspective.

She is also quite concerned with the decline of Aboriginal language amongst members of the community. None of her learners speak an Aboriginal language. In response, the Centre now offers courses in Aboriginal languages – Ojibway and Mohawk – and Claire actively recruits Aboriginal tutors and instructors for the program.

In addition, other special projects have been initiated. The National Literacy Secretariat has provided teaching of the Internet to interested students. The program has also participated in community feasts and activities, and is often able to augment its budget through various community fund-raising events.

Chippewas of Georgina Island Native Literacy Program
Georgina Island RR No.2
Sutton West, Ontario L0E 1R0
Tel: (705) 437-4327
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Resource Contact: Lynne Taylor

Host Organization: Georgina Island Public School

Community Served: Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation

Program Mission & Objectives:

Founded in 1988 by the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, the Native Literacy Program began as a drop-in program to serve the needs of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, as well Aboriginal people on the mainland. The Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation has a population of approximately 170 people.

The literacy program is located in the Georgina Island Public School library. The program is geared to learners at the basic and intermediate literacy level. Initially instruction was provided by means of one-on-one tutoring and small classes. In 1997, the program also began offering Plato/Pathways computer-assisted instruction. Four of the six program computers are equipped with the Plato/Pathways program for holding small-group sessions. The literacy program also offers Ojibway language classes, beading classes, upgrading, correspondence courses and basic computer training. Although primarily an adult literacy program, tutoring support is also provided to children in the kindergarten to Grade 8 level at the Georgina Island Public School, on an as-needed basis.

Informal interviews are held with new learners interested in participating in the program. Drop-in learners are required to sign in and select their subject areas for computer-assisted instruction.

Program participants and practitioners are involved in community activities to promote awareness of Aboriginal languages at career days and to raise program support through such things as 50/50 draws, raffling of beading-class products and bingos.

Program Features:

- The one full-time staff member (coordinator) has two volunteers who provide tutoring support to the program.

- A total of 16 learners are currently participating in all the programs, seven of whom are specifically using the Plato/Pathways program. Eighty percent of the current learners are of Aboriginal ancestry; 50% range from 16 to 24 years of age; 25% range from 25 to 39 years of age; the remainder are 40 years plus. Sixty-three percent are female. On average, learners have nine to ten years of formal schooling upon entering the program.

- The Native Literacy Program is open Monday to Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. for drop-in and scheduled classes. Specific Plato/Pathways instruction is offered on Thursdays, and separate cultural classes in the Ojibway language and beading are held one evening each per week. A scrabble game is organized one afternoon each week to encourage adults 50-years-plus of age to come visit the program. Basic computer training will also soon be offered for five hours each day, three days per week.

- The program is funded by the Ministry of Education and Training. Learners are reported to enter the program because its location in this island community makes it convenient to attend. Potential learners are also aware of the program and what the Plato/Pathways program can offer them, because of the program's successful promotion within the community. Some of the program features that appeal to learners include: the program offers a private, quiet and comfortable learning environment; the instructors and staff at the library and school; and the ability to work independently and at their own pace with the Plato/Pathways program.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

- Funding is being cut every year. Program coordinator position may need to be reduced to part-time as a result.

- Funding rules are changing (e.g., new client-tracking system required for new funding).

- No funding is available for retaining Aboriginal language classes.

Chippewas of Rama First Nation Native Literacy Program
Box 35
Rama, Ontario
L0K 1T0
Tel: (705) 329-1545 (ext. 435)
Fax: (705) 329-3067

Resource Contact: Shirley Shilling

Host Organization: Chippewas of Rama First Nation

Community Served: Rama and surrounding communities

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Chippewas of Rama First Nation Literacy Program is celebrating its ninth anniversary in August, 1998. This drop-in program is geared to adults and serves both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people residing on the Chippewas of Rama First Nation reserve, and surrounding communities. The mission of the literacy program is to "provide culturally-based opportunities for the people of the Native community and surrounding areas to develop literacy skills which will assist each person on their path to self-sufficiency".

The program focus is on learners whose reading, writing and numeracy skills are at the Grade 3 to 4 level. Individuals requiring tutorial support are matched to a volunteer. The tutor and learner agree to the number of hours required to meet the learner's needs. Instruction is provided through one-on-one tutoring as well as video tutoring. The video-assisted instruction package, a self-taught program, includes Onward Learning Systems, Video Tutor Handbook and Home Tutor Guide.

The program also actively promotes the retention of Aboriginal language by offering Aboriginal language classes (reading and writing) and Aboriginal language translation. This Aboriginal language program component is seen by program staff as being critical to learner success and the development of a sense of identity.

The program is complemented by computer training, job preparation and life-skills training programs which are also offered by the Chippewas of Rama First Nation and which are easily accessed by literacy program participants.

The program also strongly believes in community participation to promote Aboriginal language and culture. Past activities which the program has either participated in or coordinated have included: the annual "Family Affair"; story telling (e.g., Nanabush stories); sweetgrass braiding; making dream catchers; Aboriginal feasts; powwows and music. The "Family Affair" event was very popular. This event saw the literacy program coordinator sitting in a rocking chair telling Aboriginal stories while someone else made dream catchers.

Program Features:

- Five volunteers are on stand-by to provide tutoring support to the full-time program coordinator.
- The program runs from September to May each year. Aboriginal language literacy classes are held three times per week.
- Eighty-nine percent of the current learners are of Aboriginal origin. Learners range from 25 to 39 years of age, and 67% are female.
- Aboriginal learning material used in the program is developed and adapted by the coordinator. This material is supplemented with reading material borrowed from ALPHA and the Orillia Literacy Council.
- The program is funded by the Ministry of Education and Training. Participants enrol in the program because they want to better their reading and writing skills and/or they have small children that they want to help learn. The material used in the program is well liked by participants. The program coordinator is a strong supporter of sharing ideas and success stories at workshops and conferences.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Serious concerrns were raised about the adequacy of funding, as the lack of it negatively impacted program performance. Funding requirements also demanded an inordinate production of statistical material placing emphasis on quantity more than quality. Additionally, considering the few fluent Aborigianl speakers left in the community, it is hoped that more students interested in *Aboriginal Language Literacy* will come forward.

Enjikendaasang Learning Centre
c/o Mississauga #8 First Nation
PO Box 1299
Blind River, Ontario
P0R 1B0
Tel: (705) 356-3197
Fax: (705) 356-1740

Resource Contact: Joanne Boyer

Host Community: Mississauga #8 First Nation

Communities Served: Mississauga #8 First Nation, Serpent River First Nation, Sagamok First Nation
Whitefish River First Nation

Program Mission and Objectives:

The Vision Statement for Enjikendaasang is, "to provide learning services based on the individual needs of community members for enriching and involving them in furthering their educational, social, cultural and personal growth towards an independent lifestyle. We strongly believe that by taking a holistic approach to learning and addressing the individual needs, our services will impact a qualitative lifestyle for the children and families within our communities, whereby giving back to the community is an achievable outcome."

The program is available to Aboriginal learners in each of the communities, and those living within a 120-kilometre radius, from Iron Bridge to Sagamok Anishnabek, along the North Channel of Lake Huron. The main office at the Mississauga #8 First Nation is housed in two portables that were bought from the Elliott Lake Board of Education for $1 each. Joanne then had the monumental task of securing funding to renovate the portables – replacing the windows, repairing the roof, building a ramp to make the building accessible, and putting in air-conditioning and heating – a process which took two years.

Program Features:

- There is one full-time coordinator at Mississauga #8, with part-time liaison workers at each of the sites, who report to Joanne, yet are technically employees of their respective First Nations.

- Intake is done through an informal chat, to set a welcoming atmosphere in which trust is paramount – they identify barriers, such as child care and transportation, diabetes.

- The program offers upgrading to a certificate level, at which point the learners are referred to the Adult Education program on the First Nation, yet have the option to come back to the literacy program for moral support as needed.

- The program also offers the basics of learning to take notes, how to listen – "Learning how to learn is a very important part of learning. Learning is lifelong."

- The curriculum is a mix of appropriate materials, decided upon jointly by the learners and the practitioners.

- Learning activities are geared to the strengths, interests and needs of the learners –e.g., "Army Bob", who was a cook, prepared a meal as a fund raiser for the program – learners then decide what to do with the monies raised.

- The program currently serves ten consistent learners, plus drop-ins.

- There is a fairly even split of male and female learners in the program.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

The Production Coordinator is a person who very definitely puts her heart into her work. In fact, the interviewer referred to her as "the dean of Aboriginal literacy". She is committed to making the program an integral part of the community by having learners participate in festivals, carnivals and any other activities that ground the initiative in the community at large. She feels that the most critical component of the program is the relationship between the learner and the practitioner, citing, "We have to take them where they are, and with what they have to offer. Practitioners need adequate training to approach the WHOLE person, not just her desire to learn, but all that may inhibit that from happening."

In previous years, the program ran very successful after-school components. Children would participate in fun learning activities, or get help with their homework. Through this initiative, many were able to improve their performance at school, and thus improve their attitude towards themselves and towards school. Sadly, changes in funding make it harder to run the program. For part of the last academic year, the Coordinator tried to run it on a volunteer basis. It remains to be seen as to whether this crucial component of the program will be able to continue.

Native Learning Program
Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre
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Fort Erie, Ontario
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Tel: (905) 871-8931
Fax: (905) 871-9655

Resource Contact: Diana Sowden, Coordinator

Host Community: Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre

Communities Served: Everyone, mostly in the Friendship Centre area

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Native Learning Program at Fort Erie seeks to empower the person so that he or she feels comfortable in society. More specifically, it works to provide language and literacy instruction as well as an Aboriginal literacy resource centre for its population. It achieves this with a program designed to develop self-esteem in a safe, nurturing environment. Moreover, students have as a role-model the coordinator herself. Diana Sowden is a graduate of the literacy program who has had first-hand experience with the challenge of taking that first crucial step toward literacy. She understands the concerns and anxieties of the learners, and strives to make the learning process an enjoyable and interesting experience. But she acknowledges that the motivation must come from the learner first. "It takes something crucial in your life to do it – an event or decision that tells you it is time, it is time to continue learning. An elderly man came to us to tell us that his wife was dying, and that he needed to learn how to read so he could give her the medication she needed."

Learners entering the program can participate in one of three projects offered. The Book Bag and the Outreach projects provide reading and literacy basics for adults; there is an after-school tutoring option for youth, a summer mentoring program involves high- school students tutoring their younger peers. As well, there is a family literacy program that encourages families to read and learn together.

Initial assessments are deliberately informal, as many learners are extremely sensitive about their lack of reading skills. The Centre's aim is to downplay any feelings of inadequacy and the staff constantly reassures its learners (current and prospective) that the service is confidential. This is done to encourage learners to take that first crucial step toward literacy. A secure environment is also fostered by the one-on-one tutoring methodology.

Governance and policy support for the program is provided by the Friendship Centre itself. The Friendship Centre also channels learners to other programs that serve to upgrade skills and prepare for the workplace.

Program Features:

- Coordinator (and graduate of the Literacy program) Diana Sowden is the only permanent staff member with the Fort Erie Program. She is assisted by two full-time staff who are employed on an 11-month contract.

- There are currently 10 learners enrolled in the one-on-one basic literacy program; half of them are Aboriginal, and more than half are men. The average grade of completed education is Grade 5 or 6. Some participants are mentally challenged.

- The program operates eight hours per day, six days per week, according to the availability of the learners. All learning is conducted in a personalized, one-on-one tutoring situation. And since there are no classroom lectures, tutoring goes on at the learner's convenience. Facilities include a resource centre equipped with computers and self-teaching software.

- While it is not accredited with any education agency, the basic literacy and family literacy programs offer a gateway to upgrading, credit courses and job-preparation workshops.

- Although 90% of the program's funding comes from the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, special funds for the Book Bag project come from the National Literacy Secretariat. Some funds are raised by the Centre through special events and community activities.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

In the Fort Erie program, the most important aspect of learning is that it be a fun experience. Motivation must come from the student, but Diana works hard to ensure that motivational levels be maintained in order to achieve success. Learners are particularly attracted by the program's secure, confidential environment, its individualized curriculum, and by the persuasive example of Diana herself. Her achievement is, in effect, an inspiration for new learners.

Aside from the perennial worry of funding, Diana cites inadequacies in the curriculum, support and safe learning environment, and the problem of distance to the centre and bus service as significant concerns for the centre. The curriculum, personalized for the learner, is derived from a number of sources and includes some Aboriginal content. A lot of emphasis is placed on learning materials that are not simply the written word. Some materials are tactile – touch, feel and understand – and prove to be an effective learning method.

Diana elaborates on this strategy; "The curriculum is an important part of our approach to learners, and we do try to include an Aboriginal portion. But it is only a part of the learning process. How we approach our learners is also based on their aptitudes and skills. How they learn reflects their skills and their view of the world – their own values as Aboriginal people. Reading and writing has not been part of their learning experience. What has been? And can we use their skills to assist them in learning how to read? We use all manner of curricula – whatever it takes, whatever works."

Furthermore, Diana stresses the need to acknowledge the learner's accomplishments. Recognition is key in maintaining interest and motivation. "We also think it is very important to provide a certificate."

The program is well connected with community-based literacy projects and maintains an affiliation with the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition.

Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC)
712 Main St. East
Hamilton, Ontario
L8M 1K8
Tel: (905) 548-9593
Fax: (905) 545-4077

Resource Contact: Michael Johnny

Host Organization: Hamilton Regional Indian Centre

Communities Served: Aboriginal people of the Hamilton area

Program Mission & Objectives:

Begun in 1987, the general mandate of the Aboriginal literacy component of the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC) is to focus on the basic literacy needs of the community. But more specifically, the program seeks to move the learner towards control of his or her life and environment. This philosophy, introduced by Ron Peters, the Centre's first coordinator, certainly holds true even today. Michael Johnny, the Centre's present coordinator, has built upon this concept to offer a community-based but personal approach to learning and self-improvement. A strong emphasis is placed on the individual, his or her life experience and community.

The learner is recruited through informal Aboriginal gatherings such as a community feast. Admission assessments are equally informal, designed to alleviate feelings of embarrassment or inadequacy. However, formal Board testing is arranged for those students pursuing advanced studies.

The program's governance and reporting mechanism operate through the traditional Friendship Centre structure.

Program Features:

- The literacy program is staffed by three full-time practitioners as well as assistance from the staff of the Hamilton Native Friendship Centre.
- Program enrolment currently figures 175 learners, of which 150 are in ILC-sponsored courses. Eighty percent of learners are Aboriginal, ranging in age between 25 and 40 years. The majority (60%) are women.
- Because of the Independent Learner Centre (ILC) correspondence work , most of the Centre's methodology is largely one-on-one tutoring. It is enhanced with weekly group work – a Circle of Learning. Motivation is maintained by a fairly

unstructured program which allows for variation and a direct interest in the lives of the clients. Although there is no set Aboriginal curriculum, Aboriginal values are included in the learning environment.

- The program operates out of the Centre itself, and occupies the basement of the three-storey HRIC building. The program runs throughout the day and evening, offering a total of 52 hours per week of instruction.

- The Ontario Ministry of Education and Training provides 75% of the Centre's funding. Federal monies are derived from the Local Delivery Mechanism (LDM). They have also received some funding from the National Literacy Secretariat.

- The literacy program is affiliated with the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Because of the emphasis on ILC courses, a comprehensive adult Aboriginal curriculum is high on HRIC's priority list. But while Michael has identified curriculum as a real concern, the Centre has nonetheless managed to include Aboriginal activities and culture in the learning process. The HRIC offers classes in Ojibway and Cayuga languages, and Aboriginal cultural events are integrated into the program. Elders have participated in the program by offering craft-making workshops. In fact, craft-making has become an important social and cultural component of the literacy program.

The emphasis on individual learning is reinforced throughout the program. Tutors, known as "coaches", work with each student and use a variety of teaching tools designed to assist individual learning. And ILC learners are encouraged to become coaches as a further component to their correspondence work. Additionally, the Men's Circle and Women's Circle meet weekly to interact, to discuss their progress, and share their learning experiences. These features, along with the individual's need for self-improvement, are what attract learners to the program. In addition, basic needs are attended to: free transportation to the Centre is available, as are soup-and-sandwich lunches for the participants. Also in the works is the formation of a Family Literacy Circle, designed to include the family in the learning process. Plans include socials, reading circles, family and life-skills training.

The program is firmly affiliated with the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition. In addition, HRIC is coordinated with other programs in the city. A social service network has been established to ensure access for Aboriginals. In addition, Michael manages to stay in touch with several literacy projects throughout the province. Adept at program management, Michael possesses the skills needed to develop an effective literacy program.

Iskatewizaagegan No. 39 First Nation
Kejick Post Office
Shoal Lake, Ontario
P0X 1E0
Tel: (807) 733-2560
Fax: (807) 733-3773

Resource Contact: Susan Adams

Host Community: Iskatewizaagegan No. 39

Community Served: Iskatewizaagegan No. 39

Program Mission & Objectives:

Formerly known as Shoal Lake No. 39, Iskatewizaagegan is a small reserve on the Manitoba-Ontario border, an hour's drive from Kenora, and two-and-one-half hours from Winnipeg. The community's priority is "to continue the education and training of community members".

Program Features:

- There is one full-time staff-person; however, Susan was able to hire an assistant for three months through mid-year funding from the Ministry of Education and Training.
- At the time of the interview, there were 20 active learners in the program, most of them women, functioning at various levels. Most are high-school drop-outs in their early twenties.
- The program has focused on academic upgrading using distance education – correspondence courses purchased from Churchill Alternative School through Lake University in Thunder Bay, and provides distance-education courses for First Nations communities in northwestern Ontario.
- Within the ILC materials, there is an Aboriginal history module .
- The coordinator has accessed Aboriginal culture and language materials from Alpha Ontario, a provincial resource centre for literacy programs which is located in Toronto.

- Most of the funding comes from the Ministry of Education and Training, with a stipend from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

- Most learners are motivated to participate in the program in the hopes of qualifying for a job, which will improve their socio-economic situation, as well as their confidence and self-esteem.

- The program has provided Ojibway literacy classes in the past; however, attendance was sporadic.

- The community also hosted an on-site high-school equivalency in partnership with Confederation College – this course was very popular, but was not repeated.

- Funding from the Local Delivery Mechanism (formerly known as the Aboriginal Management Board) made it possible for the community to provide a very comprehensive program of life skills, job preparation and literacy training.

- Graduates of the program are part of the graduation ceremonies for the elementary- school students, and even get to wear a graduation gown.

- The coordinator runs home bingos to raise money for the program.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Iskatewizaagegan No. 39 considers itself to be a fairly literate community; therefore, learners are fairly comfortable taking that next step of working towards a high-school diploma with whatever resources the community can access through the literacy program. The technology used by distance education is a bit intimidating for the students at first, but, with the help of the literacy coordinator and the lecturers in Thunder Bay, learners are able to work towards their goals. Susan plans to popularize the program by taking a picture of the new graduates and displaying it in the literacy office with the caption, "This could be you." Her main enjoyment comes "from seeing people grow and to gain in self-confidence, seeing their confidence increase so that they can go on and do other things that they would not normally do".

Kenamatewin Native Literacy Program
152 Main Street South
Kenora, Ontario
P9N 1S9
Tel: (807) 468-4058
Fax: (807) 468-3995

Resource Contact: Yon Halonen

Host Organization: Kenamatewin Native Literacy Program

Community Served: Kenora

Program Mission & Objectives:

This program began under the auspices of the Nechee Friendship Centre in Kenora. In fact, the program is now housed in Nechee's spacious former building on Main Street South. The brochure for Kenamatewin states, "Kenamatewin – a 'way of learning'. In the Ojibway language of the Anishinaabeg of the Treaty #3 area, 'ke-na-ma-te-win' means learning as a way of life. Kenamatewin Native Learning Centre offers a place and resources to support Aboriginal people on this lifelong path of learning." It goes on to say "Another step on the path of lifelong learning – a doorway to further education, training and jobs. Biindigen... come in...Kenamatewin welcomes people of all ages and walks of life."

Program Features:

- At the time of the interview, there was one full-time coordinator, and a family literacy coordinator who is fluent in Ojibway, and incorporates Aboriginal traditional teachings into the program. But the struggle now is to keep the program afloat with two part-time staff.

- The family learning component (learning together) offered fun learning activities for all ages – at the Centre or in the home – and stay-in-school support through tutoring, use of computers, and a place to do homework. It also acts as a family-school liaison.

- In the past, funding has been secured from various sources (core from Ministry of Education and Training, Human Resources Development Canada, social assistance, and the Local Delivery Mechanism), which allows for program help and student subsidies.

- Help is offered with child care, books, supplies, transportation, and includes special needs learners, such as those streamed from psychiatric care, and two who are seriously intellectually-challenged.

- The curriculum and surroundings provide a strong Aboriginal identification, and a supportive "safe" and nurturing learning environment for participants.

- The program is learner-centred in that learners proceed at their own pace.

- Ojibway language classes are offered to the community at large, and some of the literacy learners participate, as well as students from other programs in the Centre.

- Most of the learners are women, and learners are motivated to participate in the program through wanting their high-school diploma.

- The program is seen as a great entry-level system to further education and training for the learners, similar to Junior/Senior Kindergarten for elementary schools.

- The significant and most impressive component of the program is the Sharing Circle in the morning, where participants are asked to answer four or five basic questions about their feelings and the day ahead.

- The program gets the learners involved in teachings, feasts and gatherings, and arts and crafts.

- There is a computer lab (learning computer skills) with up-to-date equipment, software and Internet access. It uses SARAW (Speech Assisted Reading and Writing) software for learners with special needs.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

The program has undergone several metamorphoses since its inception. The program coordinators have been pro-active in developing unique resource materials, one of which is a game, In The Driver's Seat, for beginning readers preparing for the drivers' test. The current coordinator has been doing research on learning styles, and develops learning activities which incorporate them, e.g., Scavenger Hunt – where learners discuss the activity, get a list of things they must find throughout the community (which involves telephone calls to set up an appointment, going to the place, and securing the item), and compare stories afterwards. Through participation in the literacy service planning committee in the area, and other networks such as Literacy North West and the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition, staff are able to keep themselves abreast of developments in both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, and to provide an eclectic approach.

Ken-Dass-Win Communications
Chippewas of Nawash First Nation
RR #5, Wiarton, Ontario
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Tel: (519) 534-5092
Fax: (519) 534-5142

Resource Contact: Terry King

Community Served: Chippewas of Nawash First Nation

Program Mission & Objectives:

In 1986, Ken-Dass-Win Communications started as a full-time drop-in adult literacy program located on the Chippewas of Nawash First Nation reserve. Ken-Dass-Win Communications evolved to a learning centre in 1997, offering basic and intermediate literacy (Levels 1 to 3), GED, independent learning courses, basic computer training, crafts classes and Ojibway language courses. The objectives of Ken-Dass-Win Communications learning centre are: "to provide free learner-centred literacy skills training to individuals of Chippewas of Nawash First Nation #27; to promote historical research about the Chippewas of Nawash #27, and develop a lending library of such material, further to develop a modern library of people and events on reserve; to publish and produce materials (literature, tapes, artwork, etc.) based on research activities as long as they pertain to life, history, culture and traditional knowledge of the Chippewas of Nawash; to encourage further learning for all community members so they may be multi-skilled for these contemporary times".

Also housed at the Ken-Dass-Win Communications site is the Innovations Program, a project geared to lifelong learning, job-readiness training and employment. The learning centre and the Innovations Program are currently in the process of amalgamating their programs. Some of the programs being offered through the Innovations Program include: job-readiness training; job-finding club; life-skills workshop; assessment, referral and case management; computer labs; academics (qualified teacher available to support learners); peer tutoring; and, a job bank.

Currently there are 20 learners using the learning centre. Learners are assessed by use of the "Contact 4" test used in employment programs. Individualized study, small classes and one-on-one tutoring are available. Learners may drop in as well. The learning centre reports monthly to a Literacy/Library Committee comprised of local community people. This Committee reports to the Chippewas of Nawash First Nation Chief and Council.

Program Features:

- The literacy program has three levels: Level 1 – basic literacy to Grade 4; Level 2 – Grades 5 to 7; and Level 3 – Grades 8 to 10.

- Two full-time coordinators, one full-time receptionist and one casual employee work at the learning centre.

- Ninety percent of the 20 current learners are of Aboriginal descent. They primarily range from 16 to 24 years of age. Sixty-five percent are male and on average, they possess a Grade 9 level of formal education.

- The learning centre is open year-round, 37.5 hours per week. Evening classes are held for the language and craft classes.

- Three volunteers provide tutoring and deliver and/or participate in the Ojibway language training. The volunteer Elders have their teaching certificates and are considered a valuable resource to the program.

- The learning centre is funded by the Ministry of Education and Training, Assembly of First Nations, NLS, Medical Services - Brighter Futures, and a number of corporate donors. Additional fund-raising activities recently included an Indian auction which raised $1,400 in five hours.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

The main reason learners enrol in this program is to obtain their Grade 12 diploma. Some aspects of the program most liked by learners are: the life-skills training; a culturally-orientated program; learning about team work; and the peer support. A day- care facility is available on the Chippewas of Nawash First Nation reserve for the use of learners, as are mental health services, should learner referrals be required.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Lack of ongoing funding (the program must apply for funding on an annual basis. Changes in this regard may be in the offing)

- Insufficient program space

Lovesick Lake Native Learning Centre
Lovesick Lake Women's Association
Lakefield, Ontario
K0L 2J0
Tel: (705) 652-7029
Fax: (705) 652-0239

Resource Contact: Bruce Bellchambers, Coordinator

Host Organization: Lovesick Lake Native Women's Association

Communities Served: Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities within Peterborough county and surrounding area

Program Mission & Objectives:

Established in 1984, the literacy program at Lovesick Lake is among the oldest in Canada. Its motto, "helping people help themselves" is also very much its mission; the program offers a variety of services aimed at upgrading literacy and employability skills. Following a brief hiatus, the Native Women's Association and program coordinator Bruce Bellchambers are revitalizing the multi-tiered program with dedication and a commitment to the entire community. Initially geared to the Aboriginal population in the area, the program now attracts learners from all backgrounds. It offers several options, including basic literacy; credit courses for the GED; computer, word processing and keyboarding skills. Individual learning is the mainstay, using Jostens Computer-Assisted Learning System. It is occasionally supplemented with tutoring when necessary. In addition, counsellors are available to assist individuals in life skills and job searching.

Governance and support for the Native Learning Centre comes entirely from the Lovesick Lake Native Women's Association.

Program Features:

- Currently, the program is staffed by two regular instructors. At the moment there are no volunteers, although there are plans to recruit some.

- The program is somewhat unique in that it is open to the entire community. The majority (approximately 65%) of the 130 students in the program are non-Aboriginal. The age range is quite diverse: 57 students range between 16 to 24 years; 42 are in the 24-to-44-years group; and 31 are over 45 years of age. The average grade competence for the overall group is estimated at Grade 10.

- Because the courses offered tend to be more advanced than the typical basic literacy program, the teaching methodology here consists primarily of ILC and the Jostens Learning Systems software, which encourages computer-based, independent study. Tutoring is offered only when students experience problems. The curriculum is mainstream, with comparatively little by way of Aboriginal content. However, given the proportion of non-Aboriginal participants, this factor does not appear to be problematic.

- The Learning Centre is open throughout the year, functioning as a drop-in-style centre where students can work on the Jostens software, or simply follow up on their studies in a quiet environment.

- ILC courses are accredited with the Ontario MET. Students completing the Jostens program may request testing for accreditation and then proceed to study at the community-college level.

- Virtually all funding comes for the Ontario MET, with some contributions made by the local service club.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Typically, learners are motivated to join the program for economic reasons. While many learners enter the program with relatively good literacy skills, all are determined to upgrade. Many aim for college-level studies, knowing that higher education means higher standard of living and income.

Curriculum materials, day care and transportation are among the top concerns that the coordinator lists for the program. The staff are also working to attract a greater number of students so that they can once again offer basic literacy skills as part of the program. These are particularly important issues for this program as it undergoes a period of re-establishment. Yet during this phase, the Native Learning Centre has maintained its affiliations with the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition.

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Resource Contact: Christianna Hartley

Host Organization: West Bay Board of Education

Community Served: Manitoulin Island

Program Mission & Objectives:

Reporting to the West Bay Board of Education, the M'Chigeeng Adult and Continuing Education Program offers adult education and upgrading programs to First Nations on Manitoulin Island. Beginning in 1988 as a drop-in program offering one-on-one tutoring at the basic literacy level, the program has, since 1993, offered adult education programs/ upgrading in a more structured environment. The goals of the M'Chigeeng Adult and Continuing Education Program are to: "help people develop the reading, writing and numeracy skills necessary to meet specific objectives" and "create a learning environment that enables the person to develop their own values and ideas, and the ability to express them effectively".

The program has three tiers with three core courses – mathematics, English and science. Level 1 is basic literacy to Grade 9; Level 2 is Grades 9 and 10; and Level 3 is Grade 11. Instruction is provided by means of one-on-one tutoring, small groups and classroom presentations. The program also offers basic computer training, job preparation, career development exploration, work placements (four weeks in duration) and various activities to develop learner organizational, planning and life-management skills. Formal assessments which have been developed by program practitioners (i.e., Entrance Assessment Tool and Level Test) are administered to new program participants. There are 18 learners currently enrolled in the program.

Participants are encouraged to become actively involved in the community. The program's philosophy is, the more learners are involved in the community, the more they will be able to contribute to their own communities. In the past, program participants have travelled to

Ottawa and Niagara Falls. Community activities in which learners have been involved include: organizing winter carnival activities; various school activities; Games Day; and community feasts. On an annual basis, learners are also responsible for organizing a class trip (i.e., determining the location for the trip, planning the trip, and fund raising).

Program Features:

- The program has two full-time instructors who have each been with the program for five years. No volunteers are used.
- Classes are held from September to May each year, 25 hours per week. Learner intake is limited to the months of September and January.
- All of the program participants are of Aboriginal descent; 25% are 16 to 24 years of age; and the remainder are 25 to 39 years of age. Eighty percent are female. On average, learners have nine years of formal schooling.
- All learning materials used in the program have been developed by program staff. These materials are continually reviewed for refinement/enhancements.
- Program financial support is received from both the Ministry of Education and Training and the West Bay First Nation.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Key reasons learners are attracted to enter this program include: the program's track record; word of mouth; and quality instructors. Aspects of the program most favoured by participants include: safe environment; access to instructors; small classes; nurturing environment; and the confidence-building to enable learners to realize "they do have the skills and abilities".

The major challenge is funding. Application for funding must be made each year. Transportation and day-care problems also exist for program participants. These problems could be alleviated if additional funding was available.

Moosonee Native Friendship Centre
PO Box 478
31 Ferguson Road South
Moosonee, Ontario
P0L 1Y0
Tel: (705) 336-2808
Fax: (705) 336-2929

Resource Contact: Melody Uiselt

Host Organization: Moosonee Native Friendship Centre

Communities Served: Moosonee

Program Mission & Objectives:

The literacy program, now known as the Cree and English Learning Centre, originally started in the James Bay Education Centre (JBEC), where it got a good beginning in the first four years. However, because funding requirements stipulated that each literacy program funded through the Ministry of Education and Training operate out of a not-for-profit community-based organization, with its own board of directors, the literacy program had to seek another sponsor.

The Moosonee Native Friendship Centre met all of those requirements, in addition to having complementary programs that could refer, and provide support services, for learners. At that time, the Friendship Centre, which is 80% Aboriginal, was housed in a small building in downtown Moosonee. Moosonee has been involved in efforts over the past few years to acquire reserve status. Though they are only minutes away from the Moose Cree First Nation at Moose Factory Island, transportation is a problem for learners. The boat ride to and from Moosonee is $5 each way when the boats are able to operate, and the helicopter ride used during freeze-up and break-up is $20 each way. During the winter, vehicles are able to drive on the ice. Most learners do not have the disposable income to afford either the fare, or a vehicle. Through fund-raising efforts and strategic planning, the Friendship Centre was able to move to a new building, constructed solely for that purpose, in 1994.

The mission of the literacy program is: "Dedicating the wisdom of holistic learning, the Moosonee Friendship Centre Literacy Program aspires to provide an educational setting that supports the lifelong growth of Aboriginal people in the physical, spiritual, mental, emotional and social cycle of personal growth and development."

While the program operates out of the Moosonee Native Friendship Centre, the literacy program is open to adults of any age or racial origin. The literacy program coordinator reports to the Executive Director of the Moosonee Native Friendship Centre who, in turn, is accountable to the Friendship Centre Board of Directors. Other programs in the Friendship Centre include: Aboriginal Healing and Wellness, Lifelong Care, to name two.

Program Features:

- The program currently has one full-time staff-person, and a summer student who is working specifically on the Internet Access project which is being hosted by the Friendship Centre, but supervised by the literacy coordinator.

- Tutorial services are offered in life-skills development, reading, writing and math at Levels 1,2 and 3.

- The program has continuous intake.

- The program offers Cree Language Development, which includes basic levels of Cree language fundamentals, reading and writing in 15-week segments of four hours a week.

- Daily assistance is provided with résumés, cover letters, job search, housing search, application forms, banking and advocacy.

- The program hosts peer-group tutoring sessions for secondary and post-secondary students during the academic year (approximately 34 weeks, for an hour a week).

- The program has researched the need for, and developed, a Snowmobile Safety Course, which consists of three sessions at six hours each, which will be offered starting December 1998 to March 1999. The course will provide testing and Ontario certification.

- The program is able to recruit and maintain tutors, who use a monthly report which includes a calendar at the top, so as to report contact hours, and it captures materials being used, techniques (which include language experience, student-generated writing, tutor-written basic stories, spelling, learning games and flash cards).

- The program has served 197 learners in the past fiscal year.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

This literacy program is innovative in that it is one of a few that is able to offer literacy in both English and the predominant Aboriginal language in the area – Mushkego/Swampy Cree. It is an eclectic blend of contemporary issues (Internet, job search, advocacy) and traditional northern community activities (Snowmobile Safety Course). The current coordinator has an efficient tracking system in place to document learner participation and progress.

Niagara Regional Native Centre
RR #4
Queenston & Taylor Roads,
Niagara-On-the-Lake, Ontario
Tel: (905) 688-6484

Resource Contact: Jacquelyne LaBonté, Coordinator

Host Community: Niagara Regional Native Centre

Communities Served: Aboriginal community of the Niagara region

Program Mission & Objectives:

The current basic literacy program offered at the Niagara Regional Native Centre (NRNC) has been in operation for seven years. The program's coordinator, Jackie LaBonté, explains that the tutorial-styled program is intended to get learners "up to speed" in their literacy skills so that they can go on to better things. It offers individualized tutorials which allow for each learner to work at his or her own pace. Its mission is to encourage the development of reading, writing and thinking skills so that learners may progress to credit courses (offered through the Adult Learning Centre – a separate component of the NRNC). From there, learners can be streamed into regular programs.

Each learner is informally assessed by the coordinator upon intake into the program. With the learner, Jackie works to determine individual needs and goals before pairing the learner with a tutor. From this initial assessment, a curriculum is planned and followed during individual tutorial sessions.

The Executive Director and Board of the Friendship Centre provides support and governance to the program.

Program Features:

- Jackie is the only full-time person on staff. However, she relies on a team of volunteers who undergo an extensive orientation session before beginning tutorials with individual learners. Volunteers handle most of the tutoring, although Jackie is readily available if there is a shortage of tutors.

- Of the 42 learners currently in the program, all are Aboriginal and fully 75% are women. Age ranges between 35 and 50 years, and many have been out of school for 15 years or more.

- The teaching environment is comprised entirely of individualized, one-on-one tutoring. It is an informal session; friendships and social interaction are heartily encouraged between the students and tutors. These become effective support mechanisms as the students proceed through the curriculum.

- The program runs throughout the year. Schedules are arranged between the tutors and learners to their mutual convenience. The pair will usually work together for about an hour at a time.

- Almost all funding comes from the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training (MET). Some monies provided by the NLS were channelled into a homework-assistance program. The Centre occasionally undertakes fund-raising activities (dinners, literacy awareness gatherings) which serve a dual purpose: the community becomes involved in the Centre's program while at the same time supplementing revenues for the Centre's various projects.

- The program is affiliated with the Ontario Community Literacy program. There is no accreditation for the basic literacy program. However, once learners complete their curriculum, they are encouraged to pursue credit courses offered through the Adult Learning Centre.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Students appreciate the safe, welcoming environment, and the friendly, supportive relationships they share with their tutors. As stated, Aboriginal environment is extremely important for most of the learners. And among its many projects, the NRNC offers courses in Ojibway and Mohawk languages. These are well-attended by members of the community.

The program at Niagara Regional Native Centre is somewhat unique in that its clients are not motivated purely by a desire to upgrade their economic status. While this is always a factor, most are attracted to the program by the value it places on Aboriginal culture and language. In fact, the coordinator emphasizes the importance of Aboriginal curriculum for the program, and mentions that the need to have a good selection of Aboriginal learning materials is one of the Centre's top priorities.

Other issues of import for the Centre include transportation for the learners (which the Centre now provides), learner recognition, Elder participation and adequacy of funding, especially for the engagement of another counsellor. Also of concern for Jackie is the need for further outreach and recruitment work. She has mentioned that at the present time, the Centre has been able to reach only a small portion of the people who could take advantage of the literacy program.

Niin Sakaan Literacy Program
Sault Ste. Marie Friendship Centre
122 East Street
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario
P6A 3C6
Tel: (705) 256-5634

Resource Contact: Crystal Kingston

Host Organization: Sault Ste. Marie Friendship Centre

Communities Served: Sault Ste. Marie, Batchawana First Nation,
Garden River First Nation,
Sault Ste. Marie Jail & the Northern Treatment Centre

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Mission Statement of the Niin Sakaan Literacy Program is as follows: "Niin Sakaan Literacy Program philosophy is that of satisfying an individual's needs and wants in order to facilitate the development of a well-rounded person. The 'holistic' view takes the idea of 'learner-centred' philosophy to a new level. Learner-centred philosophy is based on the idea that a person will learn to read and write more readily when the learning materials which are used for teaching are reflective of that person's interests. In 'Holistic Philosophy' all the needs of the person are considered; mental, spiritual, physical, emotional and social."

The Literacy Coordinator is currently putting together a Literacy Advisory Committee to give her input and feedback on the various issues that arise in Aboriginal literacy programs – culture-based curriculum, special needs, fund raising, and so forth.

Program Features:

- Niin Sakaan has been in operation for almost 12 years. It currently has two full-time staff – the Literacy Coordinator, and a certified Life-Skills Coach/Tutor.
- In the last fiscal year, the program worked with 270 learners. Ninety-five of the learners were Aboriginal, with slightly over half being female. Almost half of the learners were in the 25 to 39 age group, with a few being 55 and over.
- Sessions are usually small group, and one-on-one is available as well. There is constant motion as learners move from small group to one-on-one as they wish, and are encouraged to be peer tutors by helping others out when the staff are busy with someone or something else.

- A lot of youths have been referred to the program through Ontario Works and Operation Springboard. Niin Sakaan is the only program in Sault Ste. Marie that accepts youths.

- The program is wheelchair accessible – Sault College is the only other program that can make this accommodation.

- The Life-Skills Coach offers sessions in the Sault Ste. Marie jail. She has established such a trust and rapport with the Aboriginal inmates, that when they are released, within hours they are at the Niin Sakaan to register for sessions there.

- The intake is informal, often consisting of a chat over coffee, while the staff listens very closely to what the learner is saying, then they fill out the intake forms later.

- Computers are available for learner use, either to write their own stories, or to use educational software, including games which are designed to increase the learners' thinking and analytical skills.

- The program is able to recruit volunteers/tutors from the local college and university. All of them are Aboriginal.

- The program is open to learners Mondays to Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and Monday evenings from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. While Fridays are designated administration days, learners are not totally excluded. They can come into the literacy program, depending on their circumstances.

- The staff firmly believe in using the holistic approach to teaching and learning. There is a good variety of materials in their resource centre, and they access materials through Alpha Plus Centre and the Ningwakwe Clearing House to make the sessions more culturally relevant.

- Niin Sakaan also schedules promotion days in which learners can meet and interact with respected people from the Aboriginal community.

- Learners are able to participate in other Friendship Centre activities; language classes, dances, community functions, leading to volunteering experience.

- The program receives 100% of its funding from the Ministry of Education and Training. In the past fiscal year, they accessed additional dollars from the National Literacy Secretariat to do the "Reality Check" project, which investigated issues related to Literacy and Youth.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

At the time of the interview, the Literacy Coordinator had been on staff less than a year. In addition to working with a large number of learners daily (except most Fridays), she is on the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition Board of Directors, Native College Entry Advisory Committee, and participates regularly in Literacy Service Planning Committee meetings.

While Niin Sakaan's literacy area is large in comparison to other Aboriginal literacy programs in Ontario, the consistently high number of learners participating each day means that Niin Sakaan has outgrown its existing space. It also means that the program is in dire need of more staff, with the assistance of volunteers to work with the learners.

The current climate in Ontario, i.e., Program Reform which includes measurable factors such as contact hours and learning outcomes presents a challenge; however, the staff work at capacity to ensure that each learner is treated as an individual with strengths and interests, as well as needs.

Nipissing First Nation Literacy Program
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Sturgeon Falls, Ontario
P0H 2G0
Tel: (705) 753-2050
Fax: (705) 753-0207
E-mail: fnnippy.library@sympatico.ca

Resource Contact: Karen Commanda

Host Organization: Nipissing First Nation

Community Served: Nipissing First Nation

Program Mission & Objectives:

Situated on the Nipissing First Nation reserve, the Nipissing First Nation Literacy Program began as a part-time, one-on-one tutoring program in 1991. The program's philosophy is, "Native literacy is a tool which empowers the Spirit of the Native People. Nipissing First Nation literacy promotes a sense of purpose and achievements, both integral to self-determination."

The program continues to be a community outreach one-on-one tutoring program offered on a part-time basis. Its focus is on basic-level literacy to the Grade 5 level. The Nipissing First Nation has an on-reserve population of 750 people dispersed between the main and five sub-communities. The program has the good fortune of still having the same Coordinator who was hired when the program commenced. The Coordinator also works as a part-time librarian with the Nipissing First Nation Public Library. The program has 15 current participants.

After someone has been referred to the program, an initial learner assessment is conducted by the Coordinator by means of a home visit. The Coordinator uses this visit to explain the program, determine the learner's needs and to obtain a two-hour weekly commitment from the learner to work with a tutor. A follow-up visit is then conducted to administer the Laubach assessment test. Volunteer tutors are then assigned to work with the learner. Tutoring also usually takes place at the learner's home during the day. The only set class offered by the program is a once-monthly three-hour Aboriginal language class.

The program coordinator's work as part-time librarian complements her literacy program responsibilities. For example, the library has: an automated extensive collection of Aboriginal literature (reportedly well used by college and university students); weekly "Reading is Fun" and arts and crafts classes; Elders participating in children's story-time sessions; and, plans for offering Internet training. The program coordinator, tutors and

library support staff attend community functions (e.g., Health Fair, International Literacy Day, Trade Show and advertising in the local paper) to promote and raise community awareness about literacy and the library, and to attract potential literacy program participants and volunteer tutors.

Program Features:

- The part-time coordinator is the only program staff-person. Generally, there are five Aboriginal tutor volunteers. Most of the volunteers are qualified tutors who have obtained their Laubach certification.

- The literacy program is offered throughout the normal school year.

- Uniquely, 93% of the current all-Aboriginal participants are 55 years-plus of age and of the 15 enrolled in the program, 73% are female. On average, participants possess a Grade 3 education.

- The program receives financial support from the Ministry of Education.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Three main reasons participants partake in this program are to enable them to read to their grandchildren, to balance a bank book and to obtain their driver's license. The convenience of learning in your own home, program confidentiality, cultural appropriateness, and the safe environment are appealing to program learners.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Program requires more space

- Funding is a challenge, given the part-time status of program.

Nokee Kwe Literacy Initiatives Program
120 - 388 Dundas Street
London, Ontario
N6B 2V7
Tel: (519) 667-7088
Fax: (519) 667-4872
E-mail: nokeekwe@execulink.com

Resource Contact: Marianne Hill

Host Organization: Nokee Kwe Occupational Skill Development Inc.

Community Served: London and surrounding First Nations

Program Mission & Objectives:

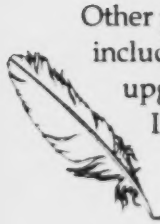
Since the Adult Education Centre was established in 1983 to provide employment and readiness training for Aboriginal women, it has expanded to being an open program available to both genders. The Adult Education Centre, located in the urban London setting, provides career management and personal development programs, while the Centre's satellite office on the Oneida First Nation has an Aboriginal university and college-preparation focus.

"The main purpose of Nokee Kwe programs is to design and deliver education, upgrading and other training programs that are culturally appropriate and student centred."

The Nokee Kwe Literacy Initiatives Program was introduced at the Adult Education Centre in 1989. A volunteer-tutor program, it provides one-on-one tutoring in basic and intermediate literacy, numeracy and basic computer skills. Volunteers are recruited, trained and matched to learners and are provided with ongoing support and learning materials. They also are requested to commit four hours per week to the program. All new learners are assessed with the Literacy Client Personal Assessment tool that is being internally developed based on the London community service providers' common assessment process. The assessment identifies the learner's needs and a training plan is developed on how to meet those needs.

In the past year, a total of 71 Aboriginal learners have participated in the program. Currently, there are 20 learners in the program, 60% of whom are of Aboriginal descent.

Other programs offered at the Adult Education Centre and/or the Oneida First Nation Centre include: basic life skills; basic computer skills; job preparation; correspondence courses; and upgrading. The Board of Directors for the Nokee Kwe Occupational Skill Development Inc. provides guidance and direction to the Adult Education Centre programs.



Program Features:

- In keeping with the Ministry of Education and Training requirements, the Nokee Kwe Literacy Initiatives Program is geared to learners functioning at the basic literacy level up to Grade 8.

- The 20 current learners primarily range in age from 25 to 39 years, 60% are Aboriginal and 80% are female. On average, learners may have a Grade 9 formal level of schooling but function below this level in terms of literacy. Learners may remain with the program for as long as needed.

- There are five full-time and five part-time staff for both the literacy program and Adult Education Centre.

- The Adult Education Centre is open five days per week, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and also one evening per week.

- At any given time, there are five to 30 volunteers affiliated with the program. Students from the University of Western Ontario may volunteer with the program to gain experience relative to their future pursuits.

- The Oneida First Nation Centre involves Elders and community speakers from the Aboriginal community in its program.

- The literacy program is 100% funded by the Ministry of Education and Training and the Adult Education program is financially supported by other sources.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

The primary reason learners participate in this program is that it will enable them to proceed to further education and in turn be able to secure employment. Some areas of the program that learners like most include: the accepting atmosphere; learner focus; learners learn to help themselves; client-directed/centred approach; learners work at their own pace; and, a supportive environment.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Lack of support from other First Nation urban organizations because each organization is "doing their own thing".

- Lack of program monies, short staffed and staff burn out.

- Reaching those clients who need literacy services (especially low-level or non-readers in the Aboriginal community).

Ojibway-Cree Cultural Centre (OCCC)
210 Spruce Street South, Suite 304
Timmins, Ontario
P4N 2M7
Tel: (705) 267-7911
Fax: (705) 267-4988

Resource Contact: Angela Shisheesh

Host Organization: Ojibway-Cree Cultural Centre

Communities Served: Timmins

Program Mission & Objectives:

The OCCC is among the first Aboriginal organizations created by Aboriginal people in Ontario, and its vision is as follows: "All of our efforts are directed towards reinforcing the strength and vibrancy of the Native culture and promoting recognition and acceptance of the Native people within the mainstream of society." The OCCC serves the Nishnawbe-Aski, which means "the people and the land". The Nishnawbe-Aski are the Cree and Ojibway people who live in a territory which covers approximately 544,000 square kilometres in Northern Ontario. This area is home to more than 40 First Nations communities, many of which are accessible only by air.

The OCCC is governed by a Board of Directors who are elected from those First Nations communities.

As of this writing, the OCCC has decided to no longer host the literacy program. Their mandate is to provide services to the First Nations communities in the Nishnawbe-Aski area, and to not get involved in local programming, which the literacy program was perceived to be. Currently, the Friendship Centre is negotiating with the Ministry of Education and Training to secure funding to offer a literacy program in Timmins.

Program Features:

- There was one full-time staff-person, although the OCCC was able to secure National Literacy Secretariat monies to hire staff for specific projects, such as curriculum development.
- The program was mainly bilingual – English and Cree.

- At the time the program was closed, there were 40 learners.

- Most of the learners had English as their second language, and wanted to learn to speak, read and write basic English – usually enough to be able to handle their own business, be it banking, housing, legal or medical.

- The coordinator chose to do her own tutoring, as it was difficult to recruit and maintain bilingual tutors; however, her son and daughters sometimes helped with preparing materials.

- Because the learners were familiar with Cree syllabics, the coordinator would use them to write the new English words, so as to help with pronunciation.

- The coordinator did not use the grammatical approach for teaching English, i.e., verb conjugation; rather, she felt it was best for the learners to master the words for meaning and context – this usually meant developing a lot of her own curriculum ad hoc.

- Most of the tutoring was done in learners' homes, partly because of lack of space in the Centre, and partly because of lack of transportation and day care for the learners.

- Assessment was usually informal, consisting of a discussion on what learners liked to do, where and when they went to school, their reason for dropping out, and asking them to write a basic paragraph, so as to show level and style of writing.

- The pervasive theme of the discussions and activities was to build up the learners' self-esteem.

- Learners' progress was reviewed monthly.

- Numeracy/math was taught in a practical, real-life manner, e.g., how to order moose-hide – how much was needed, figuring out the cost.

- Learners were encouraged to participate in community activities, such as attending the Health Centre Annual General Meeting, volunteering at the Timmins Friendship Centre dances, and participating in the local drum group.

- Learners, who were predominantly women, ranged in age from teenagers to several who were 55 plus.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Learners consistently told the coordinator that they preferred the personal approach; in fact, one learner said, "It opens the door for everything".

While Angela did her best to participate in the literacy-service planning-committee meetings and functions of the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition, this meant taking time away from the learners. Angela feels that the most important thing to do in a literacy program is to provide a proper orientation for the learners so that they don't get the wrong message about the program and themselves. That is, literacy is more than the basics of reading and writing, it's about learners having more control of their own lives. The fact that they did not learn to read or write well the first time around in the institutional education system is a reflection on the inadequacy and the inflexibility of the system, not of the learners themselves.

Literacy Centre
PO Box 5000
Oshweken, Ontario
N0A 1M0
Tel: (519) 445-2512
Fax: (519) 445-0406

Resource Contact: Elva Lickers

Host Community: Six Nations of the Grand River Mohawk Territory

Communities Served: Six Nations of the Grand River Mohawk Territory, and the surrounding areas of Caledonia, Brantford and Hagersville

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Six Nations of the Grand River Mohawk Territory reported a registered membership of slightly over 19,000 in 1996. Of this number, approximately 10,000 live on reserve. It is estimated that another 5,000 Aboriginal people live in Brantford. The Literacy Centre is housed in its own building, a two-storey wood-stained building, with a finished basement.

The Vision Statement of the program is as follows: "To provide, through a non-profit organization, free tutoring in basic reading, numeracy, computers and life skills, in a culturally-sensitive manner." The front cover of the Literacy Centre's Tutor Training Manual reads, "To Learn...To Teach...Everyone's Responsibility."

The Literacy Centre is overseen by the Social Services Committee which, in turn, receives its direction from the Six Nations Band Council.

Program Features:

- The program has been in operation since 1990.
- There is one full-time staff-person, but the program has been able to acquire 36 student placements through the Grand River Education and Training (GREAT) program over the past seven years, and an average of 35 volunteers a year.
- At the time of the interview, there were 59 participants in the program, including the children involved in the summer program. All the participants are Aboriginal.

- Tutors are recruited by the use of making presentations on Aboriginal literacy at various programs and services in the community. There are ten active volunteers, seven of whom are tutors; all are Aboriginal.

- The program has developed a comprehensive tutor training which takes approximately 20 hours, and is done individually.

- Assessment is done through informal testing in math and English, up to Grade 8.

- Tutoring sessions are either one-to-one or small group, and average two hours per week.

- Learners are encouraged to register in Independent Learning Centre courses. When the learners reach a certain level, tutoring assistance is provided for them.

- The program offers basic and intermediate literacy, job preparation, family literacy, computer training and life skills.

- The curriculum is eclectic, basically "whatever works" and is of interest to the student – the tutors invent a lot of it.

- Approximately 70% of the funding comes from the Ministry of Education and Training, and the other 30% is from Grand River Education and Training (GREAT), which uses federal dollars.

- Learners are motivated to participate because they want to improve their math and English to get into an accredited program, such as the ILC or college.

- Learners participate in Community Awareness Week activities, specifically they run the "Jail-House Fund-raiser", in which people are encouraged to charge each other with a fun offense – the maximum fine is $2.50, which the person being charged must pay double (proceeds go to the literacy program) or he/she spends 15 minutes in a pretend jail. Learners also enter a float in the annual Christmas parade.

- The program is involved with the Southern Ontario Literacy Network and the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

This literacy program has a large catchment area, and is able to maintain regular and active volunteers. The coordinator has been able to get volunteers, including friends and family, to provide a lot of the services not covered by the core grant. For example, a family member is the program's resident computer expert. Still others assisted in renovating and painting the building when it was first acquired. Elva says that many learners are disappointed when they realize that they are not able to function at the level for which they are certified; i.e., they have a high-school diploma, yet are reading and writing at a Grade-school level. Often there is a "a lot of anger and tears" as to the injustice of it all, and the approach of the tutors is to provide a safe environment in which learners can upgrade their levels, while having fun. An added bonus of this program is that, often the volunteers are motivated to go back to school. Of the 36 student placements over the years, 30 are working or are in school. There needs to be a way to report those kinds of outcomes to the funding parties.

Peterborough Native Learning Program (PNLC)
344 Rubidge
Peterborough, Ontario
K9H 4C7
Tel: (705) 741-0898
Fax: (705)749-0084

Resource Contact: Pat Powell – Coordinator

Host Organization: Trent Valley Literacy Association

Communities Served: First Nation communities of Peterborough, Hiawatha and Curve Lake

Program Mission & Objectives:

"We begin by believing in them, the Learners...in the possibility of their personal empowerment. You cannot separate the brain stem from the heart and spirit. Therefore, the program encourages personal growth and re-awakening."

A relatively young program, the program began in 1994 as the result of a needs assessment conducted within the community. It is a program very much focused on the needs of the individual learner. For this reason, it provides extensive one-on-one tutoring for each of its clients.

Incoming learners are assessed through a combination of formal and informal testing. Furthermore, the coordinator does have access to external testing to determine the level of learners. The program offers several components in basic literacy, numeracy and computer skills: Level 1 is designed for learners functioning at the Grade 8 level and lower; Level 2 covers Grades 8 and 9, while Level 3 is intended for learners studying for the GED level or above. Once the learner has completed Level 3, he or she is encouraged to continue at the Adult Learning Centre. In addition, because Trent University actively recruits students from the Aboriginal community, the Centre also offers tutoring for students attending the University.

The learning perspective at PNLC tends to be a holistic one. The program is not confined to the simple basics of literacy, but seeks to integrate life- and job skills into the learning process as well. While Aboriginal culture is not specifically integrated into the curriculum, the program does attempt to handle its subjects with an Aboriginal perspective. The Friendship Centre (with which the PNLC is closely associated) also offers courses in Ojibway language.

Immediate support is provided by the six-member Volunteer Board of Native Advisors from Peterborough County. In addition, the Trent Valley Literacy Association is the mainstream organization that oversees policy governance for the PNLC.

Program Features:

- The centre employs one regular, full-time coordinator, Pat Powell. Occasionally the administrative board provides funding for part-time staff. At the moment, one teaching assistant is contracted for the summer months. In addition, Pat has recruited eight volunteers to tutor the learners, and has had 15 others helping with various components of the program.

- Enrolment in the program fluctuates with the learners' seasonal employment. There are currently 17 learners in the basic literacy component. All but four are Aboriginal adults. Ages range between 15 and 44 years (nine are under 24 years), and most function at the Grade 8 level.

- Individual tutorials comprise the largest share of the learning process. Some formal classroom lectures are offered in the more advanced subjects (math, computers).

- Peterborough's program operates throughout the year; the setting is fairly informal. Most of the week is designated for individual tutorials, arranged by the learners and tutors themselves. Formal math classes are offered weekly, on Tuesdays between 3:30 and 5:30 p.m. Computer workshops are offered on Monday and Wednesday evenings, as well as on Tuesday mornings.

- Seventy percent of funding comes from the Ontario MET. Additional monies (approximately 20%) come from the National Literacy Secretariat, which provided funding for a study on literacy needs of Aboriginal youth.

- The program is accredited with the Ontario MET. Students completing Level 3 (Grade 9) may continue with the Adult Learning Centre for further upgrading. In addition, it is affiliated with both the Trent Valley Literacy Association and the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Students at PNLC like the fact that there is no pressure placed upon them as they learn. The tutoring environment nurtures the learners, and allows them to gain self-confidence as they proceed. Some join for economic reasons, while others do so to escape the stereotype often associated with Aboriginal people.

Powell mentions that maintaining learner motivation is sometimes a problem. Students can become discouraged when they realize just how much ground they need to cover. She attempts to allay this with some counselling and life-skills assistance. Other priorities for the Centre include, of course, funding, ("It's almost like we run this program on faith and little monies!"), as well as ensuring a safe environment for the learners and adequate support for the Centre. Community support is readily available. The Centre is well connected to local and regional literacy groups as well as the ONLC.

Saugeen Community Remedial Outreach for Learning Literacy (SCROLL)
GMB 14 RR #1
Southampton, Ontario
N0H 2L0
Tel: (519) 797-2392
Fax: (519) 797-2978
E-mail: sgeorge@bmts.com

Resource Contact: Sharon George

Host Organization: Saugeen First Nation

Community Served: Saugeen First Nation and surrounding communities

Program Mission & Objectives:

Initiated by the Saugeen First Nation leadership, the Saugeen Community Remedial Outreach for Learning Literacy (SCROLL) program was established in 1987 to "provide free learner-centred literacy skills training to individuals of the Saugeen First Nation".

An open program located in the Saugeen First Nation Band Office, SCROLL provides basic and intermediate literacy training below the Grade 10 level, Aboriginal language classes, job preparation, computer training, life skills and training for learners wanting to enrol in correspondence courses. One-on-one tutoring and small classes are offered, depending on learner needs.

In the fiscal year 1996/97, 102 learners participated in SCROLL. Effective April, 1998 program staff will develop a portable training plan for each new intake, which the learner will own and can take with them upon leaving the program. The program participates in community events, by invitation, to promote both literacy and program awareness.

The program is indirectly overseen by the Saugeen First Nation Band Council. The program director belongs to the Saugeen Social Programs Advisory Committee which in turn reports to the Chief and Council.

Program Features:

- Program staff consist of one full-time instructor and one part-time instructor for Aboriginal language instruction. On occasion, volunteers for individual tutoring are used. Most tutors are non-Aboriginal.

- Ninety-one percent of the 102 learners who participated in SCROLL in 1996/97 were of Aboriginal ancestry and 62% were female. Thirty-four percent ranged from 16 to 24 years of age; 64% ranged from 25 to 55 years of age; and the remainder were 55 years plus. On average, learners have some high-school formal education.

- The program is open year round from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

- A wide variety of learning material is used in order to meet the individual needs of learners. Aboriginal learning material is used if requested by a learner. A past Elders' project resulted in the publishing of three how-to books on quilting, Aboriginal food and the making of quill boxes, respectively.

- SCROLL is totally funded by the Ministry of Education and Training.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Motivating factors for learners to sign up with the program include: to better their skills to be able to access other courses and to obtain their Grade 12; economics; to improve their existing literacy skills and to be able to better function in society. Program areas most liked by learners include: confidentiality; class size; individual help; and, a safe environment.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- New provincial government reform requirements

- Getting stable program funding

Chippewas of Sarnia Education Committee
Chippewas of Sarnia First Nation
978 Tashmoo Avenue
Sarnia, Ontario
N7T 7H5
Tel: (519) 336-8410

Resource Contact: Pat Adams

Host Community: Chippewas of Sarnia First Nation

Communities Served: First Nation community of Sarnia

Program Mission & Objectives:

The mission of the Chippewas of Sarnia Education Committee is clear-cut and simple: to further the education of the members of the First Nation community. This takes shape in several ways. From basic adult literacy programming to credit courses and life skills development, the Education Committee provides access to a variety of options for its participants.

Recruitment takes place through word of mouth (learners often bring in new participants) and through some print advertising. Intake assessments on new participants are administered informally. Once enrolled, learners can participate in the basic adult literacy program or in credit courses (offered through the local school board). Some of the options available include life skills, computer training, Aboriginal languages (beginner and advanced) as well as upgrading reading and literacy skills. There is also a children's literacy program which provides after-school assistance at the nearby community centre.

While the governance of the program ultimately lies with the Chief and Council of the Band, the Education Committee itself – comprised of a guidance counsellor, tutor and liaison-worker – meet monthly to discuss and manage the literacy program. There is, in addition, a co-sponsorship agreement with the local Lambton County Board of Education, which enables the program to access a wide variety of learning materials. Because of this arrangement, participants in the program are able to work for high- school credits should they so choose.

Program Features:

- There are six staff members employed by the Committee, all of whom work part-time. Four work with the youth project, while two handle the basic adult

literacy component. In addition to these, there are five volunteers, two of which were recruited from the First Nations community.

- Twelve learners are participating in the adult literacy program. Nearly all are Aboriginal, and all age groups are represented. Most learners are women with an average education level of Grade 9. In addition, 25 children attend the after-school literacy program.

- The curriculum and methodology is fairly conventional: bi-weekly classroom lectures and group work is supplemented with individual study and one-on-one tutoring.

- The program operates on a part-time basis. The adult literacy group meets for two hours on Tuesdays and again on Thursdays. The children's after-school tutorials meet on Tuesday evenings for two hours as well.

- All funding is derived from the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training. However, some programming resources are available as the result of the co-sponsorship arrangements made with the local school board.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

The literacy program is closely connected to other services offered by the Band Office. It is also well connected to other regional and provincial literacy organizations. This support network, along with learner recognition, adequate day-care facilities and transportation, rank as the most important and attractive features of the program. Learners like the environment, and the facilitators are resolute in their efforts to maintain funding for these features. The learners' accomplishments are celebrated twice a year, in January and June.

Sarnia's is basically a straight-forward, mainstream literacy program that lacks the funding for many frills. The curriculum focuses on the essentials: reading, writing, arithmetic, life skills. Aboriginal culture is not specifically integrated into the curriculum, but culture and values are taught wherever appropriate. To augment Aboriginal content, Aboriginal language courses are taught. There is also a resource centre containing Aboriginal materials (some of which were produced by the learners themselves), and Elders have occasionally participated in the program.

Sioux-Hudson Literacy Council
Box 829
62 Front Street
Sioux Lookout, Ontario
P8T 1B2
Tel: (807) 737-1886
Fax: (807) 737-1772

Resource Contact: Monika Orzechowska

Host Community: Sioux Lookout

Communities Served: Primarily Sioux Lookout, but sometimes the literacy coordinator acquires project funding to do special initiatives with some of the twenty-eight First Nations communities in Northwestern Ontario

Program Mission & Objectives:

Sioux Lookout, a four-and-one-half-hour drive north and west of Thunder Bay, is home to the offices of the Shibogama and Windigo Tribal Councils, the Independent First Nations Alliance (IFNA), and many other First Nations service agencies, including the Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority. It is also the town to which residents of the 28 First Nations communities in Northwestern Ontario come for medical assistance (usually at the Sioux Lookout Zone Hospital). The population of Sioux Lookout and its recently-annexed outlying areas is 5,200, of which approximately half are Aboriginal.

In addition to the learning centre, which occupies the second floor of the building, the literacy council runs a bookstore on the first floor. The store sells books to heal the mind, body and soul. About 20% of the titles have First Nations focus. There is also a large variety of good children's books, as well as different types of teas and coffee, in addition to gemstones and beads. The bookstore began in the fall of 1991 as an economic development project, and is the first general bookstore in Sioux Lookout. The Sioux-Hudson Literacy Council wanted to create a dependable, permanent method of fund raising that would be relevant to its aims.

The SHLC's critical function is to provide a supportive environment for learners, through making the process as welcoming as possible, and to provide basic entry-level skills. In this way, SHLC sees itself as a fill-the-gaps between other community programming.

Program Features:

- Apart from the program director, there is one full-time staff-person for the literacy program, with special project funding used to acquire a full-time assistant.

- There is one full-time staff equivalent for the bookstore – usually shared by a couple of people, with several people working a few shifts as volunteers. Literacy students who want to gain retail experience also get involved. The book shop has a placement for one high-school co-op student per semester, and is usually able to hire summer students.

- At the time of the interview, there were approximately 20 full-time participants, as well as drop-in clients. Having a full-time instructor with an education background, and having a good learning-centre space is enabling the program to attract and retain a growing number of learners.

- Programming is very flexible, the preference being an informal structure that is geared to learners' interests and needs.

- Women are a large majority of the learners, with most being between 20 and 30 years of age.

- Most frequent reasons cited for inconsistent participation are child care, transportation, self-esteem or self-confidence, and personal problems.

- The preference is not to use volunteer tutors, as they are not consistently reliable.

- The program offers one-to-one and small-group tutoring in written and oral communication, basic math/numeracy, and other related skills. One-to-one is most effective because each person is at a different level; however, there may be four or five people around the table at one time, each doing his/her own program.

- The program ran LIT NORTH, an innovative literacy project involving Wahsa Distance Education students. Students enrolled in, or having completed advanced high-school English, Guidance or linguistics courses, could pick up additional high- school credits in these subjects by doing a literacy co-op. This requires the student to devote 110 hours/credit to identifying literacy needs and providing literacy/numeracy tutoring to community members. Students could

choose to work on developing locally/regionally-relevant curriculum, and continue to provide support to Distance Education Learning Centres in northern communities.

- Students' major motivation is economic (jobs) and almost all desire to have appropriate training in English.

- A comprehensive needs-assessment is being conducted in the area. Of 330 people contacted to date, fully 90% identified the need for additional training, or to improve their skills.

- The program uses a very flexible approach and teaching style, with a qualitative focus on the learners.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

In its commitment to not replicate the system that failed Aboriginal Peoples in the first place, the Sioux-Hudson Literacy Council has been creative in balancing the requirements of the funding parties with addressing the realities of the learners' lives. The proceeds from the bookstore make it possible for SHLC to serve learners that are not recognized by the funding parties as eligible for the program. The coordinator has done an excellent job of keeping up to date on resources available in both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community, for use and/or adaptation by the learners in the program to help them meet their goals.

Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto, Inc.
191 Gerrard St. East
Toronto, Ontario
M5A 2E5
Tel: (416) 963-9963
Fax: (416) 963-9573

Resource Contact: Jody McDonald, Skills Development Coordinator

Host Organization: Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto Inc.

Communities Served: Aboriginal women of Metropolitan Toronto

Program Mission & Objectives:

The literacy program is one of the many services offered by the Toronto Native Women's Resource Centre (NWRC). The Centre has been in operation since the late 1980s, and its overall objective is to provide literacy and life-skills training to Aboriginal women of the city. To this end, the Centre has created a multifaceted network that works in tandem with several institutions, including York University and the Toronto Board of Education.

While the Native Women's Resource Centre is self-governed, it must, nonetheless, remain aligned with the provincial ministry's education requirements. This is because NWRC is now part of a Toronto-wide Literacy Services Plan. Its six main programs are delivered on-site and at two other Aboriginal organizations.

In addition to basic literacy, the Centre offers a variety of degree and non-degree programs including computer training, life skills, credit courses, and job-preparation workshops. The learner's placement within the various programs is based on a personal and informal assessment interview.

Program Features:

- There are at least 100 women using the program regularly; the majority are between 20 to 35 years of age and are single moms. Most have the equivalent of Grade 9 schooling. Learning supports provided are; public transit tokens, writing supplies, daily and evening access to computers and tutors, and a resource library.

- Methodology varies according to program. The basic literacy program adopts a combination of one-on-one tutoring and group work. Unlike the conventional classroom setting, the program's group work does not follow a standard

curriculum. Students decide what they need to learn. One important activity for the group is the writing, editing and layout of the Centre's regular newsletter Women Spirit. In addition, the ILC tutoring and the Plato self-teaching computer program are currently under consideration for the basic literacy program.

- The Literacy and Basic Skills Program operates on site five days a week: Monday and Tuesday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Wednesday from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. and on Thursday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Off-site mobile services are offered at one or two other Aboriginal organizations in the evenings. During the school year, an Ojibway language course is also offered twice weekly. Credit courses and the college-bridging program are offered at the campuses of the Toronto Board of Education and York University.

- Over 80% of NWRC funding comes from the Ontario Ministry of Education (MET). Another 15% is provided by the National Literacy Secretariat. United Way and other agencies make up the final 5% of NWRC's budget.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Most learners are typically motivated to join the program by a desire to accomplish something, to improve themselves and their economic prospects. Assisting their children in school work is also a tremendously strong motivator. The program at Toronto's Native Women's Resource Centre meets many needs, not simply education. It offers a safe, welcoming environment that recognizes the values of Aboriginal culture and languages. Its focus is on the education of the whole person and it encourages participants to share their experiences.

In addition to the variety of services offered by NWRC, the Centre has produced a number of publications that celebrate cultural values while at the same time motivating students toward literacy. Funding from the Canadian Give the Gift of Literacy Foundation enabled the NWRC to publish Neem-Dah: "Let's Dance", a booklet describing Aboriginal dance and regalia. Combined with reading and language exercises, the booklet became an effective literacy tool. Later, The Many Gifts and The Sacred Home were published, and a video examining Aboriginal literacy was produced and is used for tutor training.

Many of the challenges the NWRC faces are typical of literacy programs throughout the country. An adequate and relevant curriculum that treats people as adults is perhaps the most urgent, followed by an effective method for maintaining learner motivation. Yet despite these, NWRC has identified the curriculum work that needs to be done; it is a successful and comprehensive program that has much to offer its learners and its literacy colleagues.

Literacy Program
Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre
439 Dundas St. East
Toronto, Ontario
M5A 2B1
Tel: (416) 360-4350
Fax: (416) 360-5978

Resource Contact: Sandra Pahpasay,
(replaced in 1998 by Lana Freeman) Coordinators

Host Organization: Native Canadian Friendship Centre of Toronto

Communities Served: Aboriginal adults of Metropolitan Toronto

Program Mission & Objectives:

Originally established in 1978, the literacy project of Council Fire Native Cultural Centre was one of several social programs that the Centre offered to the Aboriginal population of Metropolitan Toronto. Although it flourished for several years, the literacy program experienced a period of deterioration due to re-organization and changes in staff and policy.

The program was renewed in August 1997. Today, Council Fire's literacy program is designed mainly as a bridging program for learners who have come off the streets and want to catch up on what they have missed. It now operates a basic literacy program supplemented with advanced tutoring for learners preparing for GEDs or college. A computer-training program is also available.

Students are assessed for placement through an informal session with coordinator Sandra Pahpasay. She stresses the need to maintain a safe, comforting environment, particularly for learners who have just joined the program. For this reason, initial placement testing is most effective when it is administered informally. For students pursuing advanced studies, she will also arrange for formal testing at the Adult Learning Centre when the student is ready.

Program Features:

- Staff consists of one full-time facilitator and eight volunteers. In addition, Sandra recruited specialized facilitators when needed.

- At the moment, there are 30 people participating in the program. Eighty percent of participants are Aboriginal, and ages range between 25 and 40. There are equal proportions of men and women in the group. Most have had Grade 9 schooling prior to commencing the program.

- Teaching methodology includes both conventional classroom lecturing and individual tutoring. Classes for basic literacy and math are offered on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. The curriculum is a blend of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal materials, and tends to incorporate concerns that the students must deal with regularly – sessions have been offered on cultural teachings, income tax. Nearly all students speak an Aboriginal language in addition to English. Though not officially included in the curriculum, Aboriginal languages are part of the learning environment.

- Most resources are provided by the Centre. However, the Centre also deals with the Toronto Public Library for reading materials suitable for the literacy project. Furthermore, the coordinator can arrange the use of a seminar room in the Library if she runs short of space.

- Regular funding comes entirely from the province, through the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training. In the past, the project has received grants from other agencies. For example, in 1989, the National Literacy Secretariat provided a grant for a tutoring project for Aboriginal inmates. Ningwakwe Clearing has provided some monies for reference materials (dictionary, etc.)

- The program is affiliated with the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Learners choose to join the Council Fire program because they see it as a route off the streets and toward a better life. This is, to a large degree, the strongest motivational factor among the participants. The program is also a haven, a safe place in which all the participants feel comfortable. Much of this is due to the accommodating, low-stress environment that Sandra has worked hard to foster. Learners are recruited with publicity posters strategically placed in Aboriginal friendship centres, hospitals, and libraries – anywhere that Aboriginal adults gather.

Funding and resource priorities for the Council Fire program are varied. Sandra cites the need to provide a safe environment, feedback and learner achievement as being at the top of the list. Related issues such as provision of free transportation and community outreach are also priorities. In addition to the ever-present concern for funding, Pahpasay notes that corresponding issues such as lack of teaching materials (including audio-visual equipment) and poor computer support are some of the challenges the program must contend with.

At the suggestion of a national conference on Aboriginal literacy, Sandra strongly supports the idea. She herself has been contributing to the development of an Aboriginal curriculum, a resource which many practitioners have noted is woefully inadequate.

United Native Friendship Centre (UNFC)
PO Box 752
516 Portage Avenue
Fort Frances, Ontario
P9A 3N1
Tel: (807) 274-8541
Fax: (807) 274-4110

Resource Contact: Mike Anderson

Host Organization: United Native Friendship Centre

Community Served: Fort Frances, and the Couchiching First Nation

Program Mission and Objectives:

Fort Frances is a U.S./Canada border town with a population of approximately 9,000, while the nearby Couchiching First Nation is home to around 1,000 community members. The UNFC literacy program operates out of a facility on the main floor of the Friendship Centre, where it has an administrative office and a small classroom/resource centre, in which one-to-one tutoring takes place. Small-group evening classes are held in the lobby of the UNFC. The Mission Statement of the literacy program reads, "The Literacy program is here to help individuals to develop the necessary skills needed to function in our ever-changing society, and to educate individuals about various aspects of Native culture and traditions."

Mike is supervised by the Executive Director of the Friendship Centre, who reports to the Board of Directors monthly.

Program Features:

- There is currently one full-time staff-person through the core grant from the Ministry of Education and Training, and one full-time staff-person through project monies from the National Literacy Secretariat.
- In the past fiscal year, the program worked with 98 learners, with a fairly even split between Aboriginals and people from the community at large (the mandate of the Friendship Centre is to serve anyone in need).
- Seventy percent of the participants are women, most between the ages of 25 to 45.

- The program offers assistance with Independent Learning Centre courses, and Aboriginal material is provided as a resource if the learners specifically request it.

- Individual tutoring is provided, as well as small-group work.

- The program offers tutoring in the Fort Frances jail, where 90% of the inmates are of Aboriginal descent.

- Drop-in services include résumé writing, and assistance with letters and forms.

- Currently, intake is informal, with Mike chatting with potential learners to ascertain their strengths, interests and needs; however, the Friendship Centre is developing a common intake form for all clients.

- Assessment is done using a tool that was developed by Literacy Opportunities Ontario North (LOON), a regional support network for literacy programs – learners also write a paragraph about something they are interested in so that Mike and the learner can determine strengths and areas that require improvement. Learners also indicate on a checklist adapted from the Skills Catalogue any other areas of interest to them.

- The coordinator participates in monthly inter-agency meetings, with a view to enhancing coordination of community efforts in upgrading, job training, basic skills and literacy.

- A number of special projects have been undertaken over the years including the production and publication of a number of excellent curriculum materials on life skills, employment preparation, time management, and so forth. Copies are available at the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition (519-371-5594) and Alpha Plus (416-397-5900).

- There is currently a curriculum on dyslexia being developed and piloted.

- The coordinator has taken learners to functions sponsored by literacy networks, such as the Literacy Northwest conferences, and the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition discussions with the Ministry of Education and Training on Program Reform.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

The current Executive Director of the Friendship Centre was its first literacy coordinator. This has had benefits in that the literacy program has her full understanding, support and encouragement. Mike has been able to secure the special projects through identifying learners' needs, the gaps in what's available, and securing the advice of key people in the system, i.e., he has the political savvy to work the system to the advantage of the learners and the literacy field.

Adult Literacy and Education Program (ALEP)
Walpole Island First Nation
RR #3
Wallaceburg, Ontario
N8A 4K9
Tel: (519) 627-3936
Fax: (519) 627-0440

Resource Contact: Joel Johnson

Host Organization: Walpole Island First Nation Board of Education

Community Served: Walpole Island First Nation

Program Mission & Objectives:

Walpole Island and the surrounding four islands in southwestern Ontario cover approximately 26 square kilometres, and have a resident population of 2200. The Band has been proactive in working towards self-determination. For this reason, they have established their own board of education, which oversees the ALEP.

"The Walpole Island First Nation (WIFN) Board of Education is dedicated to developing a system that provides for and contributes to lifelong learning. It is the mandate of the Walpole Island First Nation Board of Education to develop literacy skills for those adults in need and to provide a mechanism to move them towards post-secondary education, training and/or to the workforce."

The literacy coordinator reports to the WIFN Board of Education, which, in turn, is accountable to the membership. The coordinator has worked closely with other programs and services on the First Nation, so that they can best design initiatives for the community.

Program Features:

- The program has been in operation for over ten years.
- It currently has its own building, a refurbished portable beside the Social Services building.
- The program has a literacy resource collection, several computers, and space for one-to-one on-site tutoring.

- Assessment is done through an informal interview, which includes the learner's past and present learning experiences and objectives.

- The program offers basic and intermediate literacy skills.

- At the time of the interview, the one full-time staff-person had accepted another position with the Band, and the recruitment of a replacement was in process.

- There have been 295 learners over the past academic year, with slightly over half of them being men. All the participants were Aboriginal.

- The learner-centred approach is used. For example, one learner wanted his "L" (learning) level driver's license. Joel, an accomplished photographer, taught him to use a simple camera, then instructed him to photograph signs in the area that he would need to know to get the license. The pictures, along with the learner's descriptions of them, were used to create a learning journal.

- The curriculum is based on "Aboriginal values", in that it is geared towards getting people functioning individually/independently, in their family, in the community, and in their work/job.

- The learners were motivated to participate in the program to meet their own personal, short-term goals. They valued the safe environment.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

In previous years, the ALEP has done special projects through National Literacy Secretariat funding, such as developing and piloting curriculum based on Aboriginal learning styles. It has operated mainly as a drop-in literacy centre. It works in conjunction with, and supports the work of the Adult Learning Centre (ALC). The ALC is sponsored by the Lambton County Board of Education and helps residents attain high- school credits.

The former coordinator, along with other coordinators across the province, feels that the Ministry of Education and Training (MET) Program Reform has changed the initial vision of Aboriginal literacy, and that the major problem currently facing the program is the funding parties' focus on statistics/contact hours. The flexibility that Aboriginal literacy had in the beginning to address the unique situations in their individual communities is no longer there, and coordinators are beginning to feel like paper-pushers. and statistics collectors for MET. Certainly, it is a fine line to walk, between meeting the minimum requirements of the funding parties, and using the holistic approach found to be most effective with Aboriginal learners.

Wasauksing Gchiyaawajik Kinomaadziwin
Wasauksing Adult Learning Centre
PO Box 253
Parry Sound, Ontario
P2A 2X4
Tel: (705) 746-1052

Resource Contact: Roger Desmarais

Host Community: Wasauksing First Nation

Communities Served: Wasauksing First Nation, Parry Sound and area

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Gchiyaawajik Kinomaadziwin came to be as a result of a vision of the community. It recognized the need for lifelong learning for all people.

Education has been approached from an individualized learning model. What this means is that each student gets the learning that he/she wants and needs. Control of learning lies where it belongs – in the hands of the learner. This process remains very flexible, able to meet the needs of the community as they evolve.

Wasauksing (formerly known as Parry Island) is ten km west of Parry Sound, and has an on-reserve population of less than 500. Gchiyaawajik Kinomaadziwin is housed in the old Tribal Office, a white two-storey building with green trim. It is situated such that when one stands in a certain spot and looks north, one can see Hay Bay; turn south and one can see the Big Sound. Such a beautiful location must be conducive to learning.

The Literacy Coordinator has an Advisory Committee (which includes Elders and other respected people in the community) to assist him addressing various program and learner issues. He reports to the Band Council monthly.

Program Features:

- The program has been in operation since March 1997, when it started out as a satellite project, under the auspices of the Sound Learning Centre in Parry Sound. This fiscal year, it became an autonomous program operating through the Wasauksing Band Council.

- It has two full-time staff (the Literacy Coordinator and the curriculum developer) and two 3/4-time staff – an academics instructor and a keyboarding instructor.

- The Centre offers basic and intermediate literacy, life skills, Ojibway language, GED preparation, job preparation, computer training, correspondence courses, homework club, games nights and scrabble tournaments.

- The centre is open Monday to Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., and Friday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

- There is a computer lab on the second floor of the building.

- In the past fiscal year, they worked with 75 learners, 95% of whom were Aboriginal, with slightly over half being female. Approximately 10% percent of the learners are 55 plus.

- Staff use an intake and assessment form that they developed in conjunction with Sound Learning Centre and Georgian College staff so as to have a uniform way of doing this phase of education programming for learners.

- The program follows a holistic, individualized method in which the students come from self-motivation and staff act as supports in helping them reach their goals.

- The curriculum developer applied to Grand River Employment and Training for training dollars that are being used for his own computer training and to develop a local curriculum which will be piloted at Gchiyaawajik, then used in the high school.

- The instructor uses a wide variety of materials, only as suited to and desired by the learners. He is sensitive to the life situations, previous learning experiences and feelings of learners. He connects learning to their daily lives and concerns.

- Most learners are motivated to participate in the program because of the desire for employment, to help their own kids with schoolwork, to increase self-confidence and self-esteem, to raise their spirits and enjoy learning, and the desire for a high-school diploma or equivalency.

- Major problems facing the program include funding, learner motivation to complete objectives, outreach to increase the Level 1 learners, a 68% unemployment rate (making hope harder to come by and maintain) and having to deal with the requirements of the funding parties.

- An employment counsellor comes in each week to provide services in the following areas: training, apprenticeship, résumés, job search (including the electronic job market), and assessing skills and careers.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Given that this program has been in operation less than two years, yet has its own building and four staff, there has to be a solid foundation. It is visible in two ways: the political will (a good portion of funding comes from Wasauksing) and the ability of the Literacy Coordinator to just go out and ask for things (this year, he was elected to the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition Board of Directors). The staff also form a good team that believes: "...the legacy of western education, which is based on obedience, 'experts' linear thinking, competition, imposed curricula and expectations, comparisons to others; i.e., power and control politics – so the question arises as to how to undo the damage done by this form of education and develop learning methods based on empowerment, wisdom, self-actualization, practical living and a holistic outlook. Coupled with this concern is the interplay between reasserting traditional ways of learning with the need to survive/thrive, in certain ways at least, in the dominant culture."

♦♦♦

"To Learn...

To Teach...

Everyone's Responsibility."

♦♦♦

Aboriginal Literacy Foundation Inc.
Aboriginal Centre
181 Higgins Avenue, 4th Floor
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3B 3G1
Tel: (204) 949-1154
Fax: (204) 947-1917

Resource Contact: Rhonda McCorristom

Host Organization: Aboriginal Centre

Community Served: Winnipeg

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation program started as a part-time program in 1990 geared to learners with basic literacy and upgrading needs. A full-time program today, it is open to motivated learners of Aboriginal descent, 21 years of age and older, who are functioning at below the Grade 10 level. The program is aimed at "where they are at and where they want to go".

The program is offered at two Winnipeg locations, the Aboriginal Centre and the Nor-West Learning Centre. Peer tutoring, one-on-one and group-discussion teaching methods are used. Literacy program components include family literacy, computer training, life skills, job preparation, community development and career exploration. One of the program requirements is that learners are expected to complete 12 hours of community volunteer work. At any given time there are about 135 learners participating in the program. The members of the Foundation's Board of Directors are all of Aboriginal descent.

Program Features:

- The program has three levels: Stage 1 – basic literacy level; Stage 2 – Grades 3 to 4 level; and, Stage 3 – Grades 6 to 10 level.

- The program has two full-time staff, both of whom are of Aboriginal ancestry. Two volunteers each also commit four to eight hours of their time per week to the program. Resource support is also received from various community organizations.

- The program is three months in duration and registration is open and continuous. The program is offered five days per week, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Learners may re-enrol in the program up to three times. Re-enrolment is based on a review of the learner's goals and plans. There is usually a six-week waiting list to get into the program.

- All of the current program participants are of Aboriginal ancestry and over 21 years of age. The program has an equal mix of male and female learners who, on average, have a Grade 4 level of education.

- Aboriginal language training is offered on a voluntary as-needed basis.

- Aboriginal curriculum material is always being researched, developed and adapted for program use.

- Eighty percent of the program's funding comes from the federal government and the remainder is provided by the provincial government.

- Aboriginal Literacy Foundation Inc. was the recipient of the 1997 Lieutenant-Governor's Medal for Literacy.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Motivating factors for learner program enrolment include referrals and the program's non-threatening environment. Aspects of the program that learners reportedly like the most include; high program standards, learner focus, flexibility, instructors, and the building of learner self-esteem. The "Student of the Month" designation recognizes learners' efforts and accomplishments (e.g., attendance, completion of assignments). A "Bounty Employer" individual in the community has been hired on contract to find job placements for learners. A fee is paid to the "Bounty Employer" for every three-month placement found.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Long waiting list, given number of keen motivated learners

- Funding issues. "Federal government should fund these programs. Everyone has the right to read and write."

- Need for national data base to access information and resources

Adult Learning Centre
The Pas Friendship Centre
Box 2638
The Pas, Manitoba
R9A 1M3
Tel: (204) 623-6459
Fax: (204) 623-4268

Resource Contact: Harlene Sinclair

Host Organization: The Pas Friendship Centre

Community Served: The Pas and surrounding communities

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Pas Adult Learning Centre opened in 1986 as an adult basic education program. The Learning Centre is administered by The Pas Friendship Centre. Since the program's inception, participant referrals have moved from being primarily community agency referrals, to some community agency referrals and "word-of-mouth" applicants.

"The primary focus of the program is to: improve their basic reading and writing skills in order to fully participate in the work place; to develop the learners' skills in reading, writing, study skills, interpersonal communication, and math to prepare for entry at the college level; to provide instruction in Phase 1 and 2 for those learners not able to enter the college system at this time; to assist individuals in increasing their employment needs."

Instruction methods include one-on-one tutoring, classroom group instruction and experiential learning. Learner capabilities are assessed by means of an interview. Currently, 18 learners are enrolled in the Learning Centre Program. Other programs or instruction offered either through The Pas Friendship Centre or the literacy program include; life skills, Aboriginal language, GED, college preparation, computer training and job preparation. Reporting to The Pas Friendship Centre, a Literacy Working Group comprised of community members acts in an advisory capacity to the program.

Program Features:

- Although the Learning Centre targets learners at below the Grade 10 level, learners at the community-college level are also referred to the Centre for help in English and mathematics at every level of the program.

- The program employs two full-time staff, both of whom are of Aboriginal descent. Volunteers are also used.

- Classes are held yearly September to June, Monday to Thursday, 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Wednesday evenings from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The program has a continuous intake practice.

- Currently, 90% of the learners are of Aboriginal ancestry. While their ages range from 16 to 55 years of age, 50% are in the 16-to-24 age group. There is an equal mix of male and female participants. On average, learners have seven to eight years of formal schooling.

- No specific curriculum is used, rather the focus is on using what works with learners.

- The Adult Learning Centre is funded by Manitoba Education and Training with additional fund raising and grant funding coming from The Pas Friendship Centre. Program learners are also involved in monthly fund-raising activities (e.g., selling food hampers at bingos, selling fishing derby tickets).

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Learners are motivated to attend this program because of both formal and word-of-mouth referrals. The aspect of the program reportedly most liked by learners is an Aboriginal instructor who can appreciate their background and understand their needs.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Limited funding

- Obtaining course accreditation

- Attracting additional volunteers

- Motivating regular attendance

Beat The Street Learning Centre
355 Donald Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
A3B 2J1
Tel: (204) 943-0918
Fax: (204) 947-5958

Resource Contact: Marlene Chartrand

Host Organization: Beat The Street Learning Centre

Community Served: Winnipeg, Manitoba

Program Mission & Objectives:

Beat the Street Learning Centre opened in Winnipeg in 1987. The Centre's vision is to "enhance participation in life through literacy".

All four programs offered by Beat the Street Learning Centre have a literacy component and all utilize individualized learning and classroom instruction in combination with peer tutors. Two of the programs are offered in partnership with the federal government, one with the Correctional Service of Canada and one with Human Resources Development Canada. A third program is provided in partnership with Taking Charge Inc., a non-profit organization. The last program offered is the Learning Centre Program. All individualized learning programs, the Centre's programs are open to learners 16 years of age and older who are functioning at or below the Grade 10 level. All partnership programs include formal CAAT testing to determine the literacy level of the learner. There are approximately 150 learners in total enrolled in Centre programs. The Centre has a Board of Directors whose members are primarily of Aboriginal descent.

Program Features:

- The partnership program with the Correctional Service of Canada, Parole Services is a six-week program designed to provide a maximum of 15 participants with literacy, life skills and employment preparation. There are currently six learners enrolled in this program.

- The partnership program with Human Resources Development Canada is a one-year program offered to Aboriginal youth aged 16 to 24 years. This program, which currently has 15 learners, is intended to provide participants with literacy, numeracy, life skills, civics, employment preparation and work experience .

- The partnership program with Taking Charge Inc. is a 16-week literacy/academic program for single parents. This program, which currently has 20 learners, is designed to provide participants with literacy, life skills and employment preparation.

- The Learning Centre Program is a self-funded program, offering informal training and support in computers and basic literacy and numeracy skills as needed. Programs run during the day and in the evenings. The program is open to anyone, including other Centre program participants. There is no waiting list, attendance policy or set term for graduating, rather the program focuses on learner participation. Approximately 75% of the current 40 to 50 learners are of Aboriginal ancestry; 27% are 15 to 24 years of age; 65% are 25 to 40 years of age; 8% are 40-plus years of age; and, 60% are male .

- All of the above programs are offered on a continuous basis. The Centre is open five days and four evenings per week.

- The Centre has five full-time and one part-time staff who are primarily of Aboriginal descent.

- Elders, role models and speakers are included in the Centre's programs. At any given time, ten to 15 volunteers participate as tutors on an ongoing basis. An outreach worker follows up on how learners are doing, on a monthly basis, through various means including site visits, telephone and mail.

- The Centre programs are funded by HRDC, Correctional Service of Canada and Taking Charge Inc. Other funding sources have included private corporations.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Enrolment in the partnership programs is primarily based on referrals. Motivation for learner enrolment in the Learning Centre Program includes the programs' informal atmosphere; family-like environment; no barriers; flexible and open hours; and the fact that the program is both learner-focused and paced. Learners also reported that they very much enjoyed the Centre's new location. Of concern is the fact that funding criteria is usually geared to a higher level of education, which does not address the needs of Aboriginal people. Continuity of funding is also a problem.

Dauphin Adult Learning Centre
Dauphin Friendship Centre
210 - 1st Avenue North East
Dauphin, Manitoba
R7N 1A7
Tel: (204) 638-5707
Fax: (204) 638-4799

Resource Contact: Barb St. Goddard

Host Organization: Dauphin Friendship Centre

Community Served: Dauphin and surrounding communities

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Dauphin Adult Learning Centre provides programs and services to Dauphin and surrounding communities. It is an integral part of the Dauphin Friendship Centre. The Dauphin Friendship Centre's mission is "to enhance the quality of life for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the community by working together to provide quality programs and services to meet the needs of our members and the community at large".

Friendship Centre programs and services include: basic upgrading; preparation for GED; correspondence courses; individual tutoring; basic computer training; English as a second language; life skills; employment-related skills; and, working with special-needs clients. The Dauphin Adult Learning Centre program was established in 1987 to specifically assist in breaking barriers for individuals wishing to improve their literacy skills. The Centre offers an individualized learner program with one-on-one tutoring and small-group sessions. Learner capabilities are assessed by means of an interview. There are currently 34 learners enrolled in the program. The Learning Centre is governed by a Working Group comprised of community members. This Working Group reports to the Dauphin Friendship Centre Board of Directors. More than half of the Working Group members are of Aboriginal descent. Literacy program community involvement has been innovative and has included such activities as partnerships, fund raising and volunteering.

Program Features:

- Learning Centre programs include basic and intermediate literacy, job preparation, basic computer training, life skills, upgrading (to Grade 10) and correspondence courses.

- One full-time staff member is dedicated to the Learning Centre. The program also utilizes five volunteers, half of whom are of Aboriginal descent.

- The program is offered yearly from September to June, four days per week, with two additional two-hour evening sessions. Registration is continuous.

- Current clients range from 16 to 39 years of age; 65% are of Aboriginal descent; and, there is a 50/50 gender mix.

- A social studies lesson plan book titled "Chikekendamun" (So You Will Know) was developed by the Learning Centre to include local Aboriginal history and culture in its curriculum.

- The Learning Centre is funded 50% by Manitoba Education and Training and 50% by the Dauphin Friendship Centre.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

The safe, non-threatening program environment attracts learners. Learners reportedly enjoy the program's relaxed atmosphere, open dialogue and career counselling which helps them establish realistic goals.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Lack of sufficient continuous funding

- Obtaining course accreditation

- Attracting volunteers

Family Focus For the Future
Selkirk Friendship Centre
425 Eveline Street
Selkirk, Manitoba
R1A 2J5
Tel: (204) 482-7525
Fax: (204) 785-8124

Resource Contact: Karen Boucher

Host Organization: Selkirk Friendship Centre,
Lord Selkirk School Division #11

Community Served: Selkirk and surrounding communities

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Family Focus For the Future program was established at the Selkirk Friendship Centre in 1996. This is a part-time family literacy program offered to low-income parents and their pre-school children, and moms-to-be. There are currently eight to ten program participants per month. The program encourages overall healthy eating and healthy lifestyles for families. It also provides pre/postnatal services to mothers and provides parents with family activity ideas by focusing on the importance of learning through play and encouraging children to enjoy reading. Both mother/child interaction and small-group instruction are utilized. Program participants are involved in community activities (e.g., Christmas float, intra-library activities, annual kids' festival) to raise community awareness about the program and to recruit potential participants. Day care and transportation assistance is also provided for learners on an as-needed basis. The Program Co-facilitator is also responsible for the Selkirk Adult Learning Centre at the Selkirk Friendship Centre.

Program Features:

- The program has five part-time staff, including workers who provide babysitting services for program participants. Former learners are strongly encouraged to continue their involvement in the program by providing paid services (e.g., babysitters in the day care facility), as well as volunteer services (e.g., serving on committees).

- Two-hour program sessions are held twice weekly in the mornings for four-week blocks at the Selkirk Friendship Centre and Family Resource Centre.

- All of the program's current participants are female; 60% are of Aboriginal descent; 55% range from 16 to 24 years of age; and, 45% range from 25 to 39 years of age.

- A descriptive manual outlining the step-by-step development of the program has been created by program facilitators.

- One-hundred percent of program funding is received from NLS. Recent classes also produced and published two books (Around the House and Fast Family Favorites) which are used for fund raising.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Learners are motivated to enrol in this program in order to better interact with their children and to help their children lay the foundation for reading and writing. Some of the aspects of the program that learners reportedly like most include program flexibility, informality, and comfortable environment.

Two issues of concern for the program are:

- Unstable funding

- Recruiting participants

Ma-Mow-We-Tak Adult Basic Education Program
Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre
122 Hemlock Crescent
Thompson, Manitoba
R8N 0R6
Tel: (204) 778-7337
Fax: (204) 677-3195
E-mail: Abe@norcom.mb.ca

Resource Contact: Renee Kastrukoff

Host Organization: Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre

Community Served: Thompson

Program Mission & Objectives:

Since 1990, the Ma-Mow-We-Tak Adult Basic Education Program has been administered by the Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre Inc. The Centre's Mission Statement is, "The Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre will promote and provide culturally-sensitive programs and services with the community through empowerment, respect, accountability and leadership." There are several cultural, social, recreational and education programs and services offered by the Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre. These include Employment/ Training Programs, Referral Services, Advocacy and Liaison, Counselling, Cree Language Program, Activities for Elders and Children, Interpreter/Escort Program, Translation Service, Relocation Assistance, Mental Health Services, Parenting Programs, Resource Library, Aboriginal Awareness Days, Gym Nights and the Adult Basic Education program.

The Adult Basic Education Program offers individual and group instruction to anyone 18 and older. The majority of learners in this program are functioning below the Grade 7 level. Maximum enrolment is 15 learners per class and average attendance is ten learners per class. Education levels of learners are determined by assessment tests and individual interviews. Many learners also participate in the CAAT test offered by the local community college. There is an Adult Basic Education Advisory Board comprised of various community agency and organization representatives as well as those who represent themselves. This Board operates in an advisory capacity and the Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre is accountable to this Board. The administration of the program is operated by the Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre and overseen by the Board of Directors.

Program Features:

- The program offers the following levels: Stage 1 is basic literacy; Stage 2 is at the Grades 3 to 5 level; Stage 3 is at the Grades 6 and 7 level. Also offered upon request is GED preparation and college preparation.

- The program has one full-time instructor as well as an individual who is on a training program working in the ABE program. There are five program volunteers at this time.

- The program operates on the school-year calendar, September to June. Classes are offered three and-a-half days a week as well as an evening class. Also offered to the learners are various Employment Skills Training Workshops through the Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre's Employment/Economic Development Unit. Learner intake occurs year round.

- All current learners are of Aboriginal descent; 80% are 25 to 39 years of age and 80% are female. Most of the learners are single parents and receiving social assistance.

- Curriculum material includes the Laubach and Challenger series, Contemporary and Hooked on Phonics. The on-site Resource Library provides Aboriginal-related material and videos of Aboriginal orientation. Sharing Circles and Aboriginal resource guest speakers are also used in the program. Learners also serve dinner at the monthly Elders Suppers hosted by the Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre. Learners and their families participate in many Friendship Centre activities and have at times volunteered.

- Funding for this program is cost shared between the Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre (60%) and the Province of Manitoba (40%). Learners sometimes fund raise for activities and events for the classroom and have at times worked at Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre bingos.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Many learners enrol in this program to further their education, to seek assistance with employment readiness, to learn life skills required for everyday living, and often for social supports and contacts. Learners have responded quite favourably to the program and have an easy-going rapport with the instructor and other Friendship Centre staff. Subsidies for child care and transportation may be provided depending on available funding and learner need.

Welfare reform has placed many employment demands on social assistance recipients. Because of low literacy levels, it is extremely difficult if not impossible for these individuals to secure and maintain gainful employment. If a person does not have the literacy, life skills and employment skills required, their chance of being employed is limited.

Mainstream education programs often advance students without providing them with basic literacy skills. For example, many learners report having a Grade seven education but are often functioning at a level much lower than that.

Social problems, life skills, financial limitations and self-esteem issues have a significant impact on attendance and drop out rates.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Funding
- Learner motivation
- Attendance

Native Employability and Training Centre
Box 250
Norway House, Manitoba
R0B 1B0
Tel: (204) 359-6296
Fax: (204) 359-6262
E-mail: kathleen@gatewest.net

Resource Contact: Kathleen Leary

Host Organization: Education and Training Division, Norway House Cree Nation

Community Served: Norway House community and Norway House Cree Nation

Program Mission & Objectives:

Founded in 1990, the Native Employability and Training Centre is administered by the Norway House Cree Nation, Education and Training Division. The centre's primary aim is to get learners to a level to access employment or job placements or to access additional training for job placement. Centre programs include: basic and intermediate literacy; job preparation; computer training; upgrading credits; other credit and correspondence courses. Past graduates of the Native Employability and Training Centre have been accepted into the Grade 11 and mature student program at the Norway House High School.

The job placement component of the program is three to six months in length and includes work placements in such areas as apprenticeship trades, the Band Office and community businesses. Literacy program courses, offered through one-on-one and small-class instruction, are open to any community member wanting to upgrade. The CAAT is administered to new program participants. Program intake is continuous as space allows. There are currently 25 learners in the centre's basic and intermediate literacy program. The literacy program also includes community activities such as a work experience program, stay-in-school initiatives, celebrating historical events, Treaty and York Boat Days and other special holiday events.

Program Features:

- There are two instructors and one support staff member dedicated to the literacy program.

- The program is held yearly from September to June, Monday to Friday, for six hours each day. A Home Study program is also available for those learners who are unable to attend the centre's full-time program. To encourage program attendance, learners are eligible to receive a day-care subsidy from the centre.

- Although the program has an open enrolment policy, all of the current learners are of Aboriginal descent. Sixty per cent are female. Learners generally range from 18 to 35 years of age.

- The program is totally funded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Acquiring the skills to secure employment is what attracts learners to this program. The program's flexibility also appeals to learners who "may be juggling many personal issues". Some aspects of the program that participants like most include safe environment, quality of instructors, and class size.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Financial resources

- Space

- Learner motivation

Selkirk Adult Learning Centre
Selkirk Friendship Centre
425 Eveline Street
Selkirk, Manitoba
R1A 2J5
Tel: (204) 482-6926
Fax: (204) 785-8124

Resource Contact: Bill Gamble

Host Organization: Selkirk Friendship Centre,
Lord Selkirk School Division #11

Communities Served: Selkirk and surrounding communities

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Selkirk Adult Learning Centre, a community-based literacy program, was established in January, 1986. Located at the Selkirk Friendship Centre, the Learning Centre serves Selkirk and surrounding communities. The Learning Centre is designed to benefit adults 18 years of age or over who would like to improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills, or may want to improve or review their skills in preparation for entry into other programs. The Learning Centre programs include: basic reading, writing, spelling and math skills; upgrading up to the Grade 9 level; family literacy; computer awareness; life skills (informally provided); math and English review and pre-GED. The program is offered through one-on-one tutoring and small-groups sessions.

Twenty learners are currently enrolled. Initial learner intake involves an interview and informal reading, writing and mathematics assessment. The Literacy Working Group which oversees the Selkirk Adult Learning Centre is comprised of local community representatives and the Director of the Selkirk Friendship Centre. The Director of the Selkirk Friendship Centre acts as a liaison between the Literacy Working Group and the Selkirk Friendship Centre Board of Directors. In addition to coordinating this community-based program, the Centre's program coordinator is also responsible for the "Family Focus For the Future" family literacy program, at the Selkirk Friendship Centre.

Program Features:

- The Learning Centre has three part-time staff and six volunteers, 20% of whom are Aboriginal people, who are shared between the Learning Centre Program and the Friendship Centre's family literacy program.

- Fifty percent of the program's current learners are of Aboriginal descent; 50% range in age from 25 to 39, and 55% are female.

- The program is held four afternoons and two evenings per week in three-hour sessions at the Selkirk Friendship Centre and local high school.

- No prescribed curriculum is followed. Getting the involvement of former learners in various areas of the program (e.g., as peer tutors) continues to be a program focus. A nutritional component, which incorporates Aboriginal material, is also integrated into the program.

- The Learning Centre is funded 50/50 by NLS and Manitoba Education and Training.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Learners are motivated to enrol in this program for economic reasons; for specific short-term goals (e.g. obtaining a driver's license); to better their literacy skill level; and to improve themselves so they can better provide for their families. Some of the aspects of the program that learners reportedly like most include: flexible program hours (i.e., afternoon and evening sessions); program informality; non-threatening environment; and that the program assists learners in helping their own children to read and write.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Funding

- Sufficient program space

- Motivating learners (i.e., drop-out rate)

- Attracting and retaining volunteers

- Learners want courses to be accredited

♦♦♦

"Parents want to improve their own skills

so that they can help their children directly."

♦♦♦

Adult Basic Education & Tawow Literacy Programs
The Circle Project Association Inc.
1102 - 8th Avenue
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4R 1C9
Tel: (306) 347-7515
Fax: (306) 347-7519

Resource Contact: Ann Perry

Host Organization: The Circle Project Association Inc.

Community Served: Regina

Program Mission & Objectives:

Founded in 1990, the Circle Project, a non-profit organization, started a basic literacy project designed to meet the diverse needs of the urban Aboriginal community. By 1993/1994, the project began to offer more formal programs on a full-time basis. In keeping with the Aboriginal culture, values and traditions, the Circle Project adheres to a holistic philosophy which is reflected in its approach and program delivery. The Circle Project's mission is, "to provide support and programs based on the Aboriginal vision of wholeness, balance and healing. By promoting positive human development, we encourage people to help themselves through education, cultural awareness, family and community".

The Circle Project currently offers two literacy programs. Current total learner program enrolment stands at 24. Both programs use one-on-one and group instruction. Learner intake assessments include an aptitude test and interview. The Centre Project enjoys the support of the community as is evidenced by various successful community activities (e.g., resource exchange, fund raising, equipment/services donations). In addition to the Project's two current literacy programs, the following programs are offered: First Nations Parenting; Womenspeak Sharing Circle; 12 Step Recovery Program; Healing Circle Program; Addictions/Recovery Circle; Native Ministry Program; and, Early Intervention Program. Some of the services offered include: food-bank referrals; fine-option placement; community relations; advocacy and support for clients; Elder consultations/referrals; and, detoxification referrals. The Circle Project Council, the Project's governing body, has a majority of Aboriginal members.

Program Features:

- The Circle Project's literacy programs include the Adult Basic Education program and the Tawow - Young Offenders Literacy program. Both are open programs, learner focused, and geared to returning students generally functioning at the Grades 5 to 10 level.

- The Circle Project has nine full-time and four part-time staff, two of whom are dedicated to delivering the project's literacy programs. Volunteer tutors (four) are used in both programs.

- Both programs are held yearly from September to June, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., five days per week.

- Over 90 % of the programs current participants are of Aboriginal descent; 60% range from 16 to 24 years of age; 30% are 25 to 39 years of age; the remainder 40 to 55 years of age; and 75% are female. On average, learners have seven to eight years of formal schooling.

- Program activities include role-model speakers, healing circles, Womenspeak circles, Christmas feast, the ongoing involvement of Elders, and spiritual practices.

- A "Back to Basics" literacy guide has been developed outlining the Aboriginal curriculum material and holistic philosophy followed at Circle Project.

- The Circle Project's literacy programs are funded 68% by NLS and 32% by the provincial government (Saskatchewan Education and Post-Secondary Training).

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

"Word-of-mouth" referrals, "not an institution", "a place of safety", and "a lot of recognition and respect" motivate learner participation in the Circle Project's literacy programs. The Circle Project attributes its program's success to approaching literacy "as a piece of a whole and not a whole unto itself".

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Appropriate levels of continuous funding

- Attracting and retaining sufficient numbers of volunteer tutors

- Motivating learners

Development Of Aboriginal Learning Material

Northlands College Literacy Program
Box 400, Creighton, Saskatchewan
S0P 0A0
Tel: (306) 688-8852
Fax: (306) 688-8848
E-mail: learningcentre@sk.sympatico.ca

Resource Contact: Penny Woronuik

Host Organization: Northlands College & National Literacy Secretariat

Community Served: Denare Beach and surrounding communities

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Development of Aboriginal Learning Material project commenced in October, 1997 as part of the Northlands College Literacy Program. This community-based project is scheduled for completion in April, 1998. The project is being offered in Denare Beach in response to the Aboriginal community concern that its culture was disappearing with each new generation. Concern had been expressed that young Aboriginal people could no longer speak their Aboriginal language or understand the traditions, customs and rituals familiar to the Elders. It was believed that low literacy levels and a lack of culturally-relevant learning material contributed to this situation. The objective of the project is, "to research, develop and produce print and audio-based resources with a focus on Aboriginal culture which will involve the learners in various aspects of the project as a means of further developing their skills in the areas of reading, writing, interviewing, etc., while learning about their culture".

The Development of Aboriginal Learning Materials project targets Aboriginal adult learners functioning at or below the Grade 9 level. The project is based on a peer tutoring model. Learning material (e.g., audio tapes based on interviews with Elders, and a literacy workbook) is developed by learners and is tested by the more experienced peer tutors on other learners. Approved material is then used by learners and volunteer tutors and is also used in the training of tutors in the college's literacy program. Learner capabilities are assessed by means of an interview, registration form, sample of writing and initial goal setting. Currently there are 20 learners enrolled in the program. Learners participating in this project can also access other broader college literacy program components which include: family literacy; life skills; upgrading; correspondence; job preparation; and, assistance in obtaining social insurance numbers, birth certificates, widow's pension or spousal allowance. "Adult Community Circles", also known as "Study Circles", which provide learners with the opportunity to share their experiences/ideas with others, are being coordinated by the college's literacy program in the Pelican Narrows First Nation community.

Program Features:

- The project has two part-time staff, one of whom is fluent in the local Cree Aboriginal language.
- Fifteen hours of instruction is provided per week, which includes two three-hour classroom sessions. One class is held in a private residence in Denare Beach and the other is held in Creighton at the Northlands College Learning Centre.
- Program participants, 90% of whom are of Aboriginal descent, range from 15 to 55- plus years of age and are an equal mix of males and females. On average, the learners possess eight years of formal schooling.
- Elders and other respected people in the Aboriginal community are used throughout the program in providing services such as interviewing, drawing, translating, editing and ideas.
- The program is totally funded by both Northlands College and NLS.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Factors why learners may be motivated to enrol in this literacy program include: learning and recording their culture; learning to read, write and do arithmetic; obtaining a driver's license; and learning how to complete basic business forms. The aspect of the program which learners reportedly like the most is the opportunity to learn and, through this learning, the ability to help their own children.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Funding
- Attracting and retaining committed volunteers
- Motivating learners
- Transportation for learners

Life in North Central Regina
Indian Metis Christian Fellowship
3131 Dewdney Avenue
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4T 0Y5
Tel: (306) 359-1096
Fax: (306) 359-0103

Resource Contact: William Davison

Host Organization: Indian Metis Christian Fellowship Centre

Community Served: Regina and surrounding communities

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Life In North Central Regina monthly newsletter publication commenced in July, 1997 with a distribution throughout north-central Regina. The program provides a non-structured, learner-focused environment. The program's purpose is to encourage parents and their children to further develop their reading, writing and communication skills by participating in the publishing of a monthly newsletter at the Indian Metis Christian Fellowship Centre. The newsletter is also seen as a means of reaching parents and children to help them deal with their problems. The newsletter's current readership is approximately 750. Currently, ten parents and 18 children are participating in the program.

Learners are required to conduct research and interviews, write and prepare short stories or articles on areas of interest to them for the newsletter. Learners must also learn to use the computer to type their newsletter material. Two-hour computer-training sessions, three evenings per week, supplement learner self-study, one-on-one support and small-group methods. Presentation skills are also developed to enable learners to deliver presentations on related topics in the community. Learner capabilities and goals are assessed on an informal basis. The Fellowship Centre's activities are governed by a Board of Directors which is comprised of First Nation and Metis people.

Program Features:

- In addition to the newsletter publication, the Indian Metis Christian Fellowship Centre has ongoing Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, woodworking classes, sexually-transmitted-disease information sessions, counselling services and relationship presentations. Speakers are frequently invited to give presentations on areas of interest to the learners.

- Three staff members are employed at the Fellowship Centre.

- Six volunteers dedicate more than two hours per week in their area of expertise at the Fellowship Centre (e.g., interviewing, computer skills, business administration, budgeting, resume writing).

- Ninety of the program's adult participants are Aboriginal, generally ranging from 27 to 50 years of age with, on average, seven to eight years of formal schooling. Fifty to 60% of the program participants are female.

- Cultural components (e.g. history, language, spirituality) are integrated into the program.

- The Life in North Central Regina newsletter is self-sustaining, raising funds through the placement of advertisements in the newsletter. The computers and facility are provided by the host organization.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Fun, empowerment, hands-on tasks and the fact that families can participate together motivate learners to enrol in the newsletter program. Aspects of the newsletter program which learners reportedly like most include the program's informal nature (i.e., no formal curriculum) and the opportunity to learn at their own speed.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Racism, anger

- Funding

Northlands College Literacy Program
Northlands College
PO Box 509
La Ronge, Saskatchewan
S0J 1L0
Tel: (306) 425-4334
Fax: (306) 425-2696
E-mail: ivanochkob@rongenet.sk.ca

Resource Contact: Bebe Ivanochko

Host Organization: Northlands College

Community Served: Communities in central and eastern Saskatchewan

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Northlands College literacy program was commenced in 1990 to serve communities in the northern regions of Saskatchewan. The objectives of the program are to: promote literacy in the north; increase learner participation in the economy; and promote healthy lifestyles through the delivery of family literacy initiatives. This community-based literacy program focuses on reading, writing and numeracy skill development from the basic level up to the Grade 10 level.

The program is primarily delivered through one-on-one tutor instruction. Tutors are recruited, trained and provided with learning materials by the college. They are matched to adult learners to provide one-on-one tutoring two hours per week in the home of either the tutor or learner or at the college. Tutors and learners are matched according to their cultural background and ancestral mother tongue. Tutors outside major communities are mostly Aboriginal volunteers. Currently there are 17 learners enrolled in the program. Learner capabilities are initially assessed by means of an interview and the Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT). In addition to the volunteer/tutor program, the college's literacy initiatives also include workplace literacy training; English-as-a-second-language training; and family literacy projects. The college has a Board of Governors, primarily Aboriginal people, who are appointed by the provincial government.

Program Features:

- The college is open four days per week and learners may also drop in as needed.
- Family literacy projects have included: the "Northern Reading Challenge", a partnership with the regional library for a reading and writing challenge in the community; Family Reading Circles at the Big Stone First Nation, encouraging parents to read with their children; a teen-parent conference; and, an Athabasca literacy project getting Elders to talk and share their knowledge.

- The program currently has two part-time staff (one for the eastern and one for the central region).

- The volunteer/tutor literacy program primarily serves an Aboriginal clientele. Seventy-five percent of the participants in the current program are Aboriginal people; 50 percent range from 16 to 24 years of age; and 65% are male. On average, learners have six years of formal schooling.

- Local, Aboriginal-developed learning material and resources, (e.g. Elders) are used in the program. A low-literacy learning manual, Simplified Drivers Education, based on the Saskatchewan drivers manual, has been developed by the College to assist learners working at obtaining their driver's license.

- Approximately 51% of the literacy program is funded by the provincial government and the remainder is funded by the federal government (44% from NLS and 5% from Citizenship and Immigration).

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

One significant reason why learners enrol in the literacy program is to become sufficiently literate to obtain their driver's license. Another reason is a desire to obtain their GED. Other learners enrol because of a provincial policy which requires them to either be seeking employment or attending school if they are receiving welfare benefits. Some of the program aspects that learners reportedly like most include: the flexible hours; the absence of a formal curriculum; and, helping the participant learn about what they may want.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Lack of continuity in funding (funding more likely in urban areas)

- Lack of core funding ("always hustling to get further funding")

- Lack of public transportation and distances between communities

Won Ska Voices of the Youth
Won Ska Cultural School
2005 - 4th Avenue, East
Prince Albert, Saskatchewan
S6V 2H1
Tel: (306) 763-3552
Fax: (306) 763-0156
E-mail: bear.facts@sk.sympathico.ca

Resource Contact: Darrell Greyeyes

Host Organization: Won Ska Cultural School

Community Served: Prince Albert and surrounding communities

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Won Ska Voices of the Youth newsletter initiative was established as a pilot Aboriginal literacy project in 1997 by the Won Ska Cultural School. Opened in 1993, the Won Ska Cultural School's philosophy is to provide a holistic education based on First Nations and Metis traditions. The Won Ska Cultural School primarily targets learners aged 16 to 21 years who have been out of school for at least one semester. The school's mission is: "to empower Aboriginal students to achieve their full potential as individuals through a student-centered, culturally and spiritually-based education program encompassing healing, learning and growing in the four dimensions – mental, physical, spiritual and emotional".

The objective of the Voices of the Youth newsletter program is to improve the writing, speaking and communication skills of the learners to help them further their education and to provide them with a vehicle for sharing their experiences with fellow youth. The newsletter is researched and written by the learners for circulation in the community and to youth on a monthly basis. The program involves mainly one-on-one instruction and assistance. Learners meet regularly with the program coordinator and instructors to discuss the status of their assignments. Student capabilities and goals are assessed on an ongoing basis. Successful program participants earn an English school credit. The Prince Albert School Board oversees the Won Ska Cultural School with the support of an Aboriginal Council to provide input and direction.

Program Features:

- In addition to the Voices of the Youth newsletter, the Won Ska Cultural School's programs include an Elders program, a parent support worker program, a GED preparatory course, and rehabilitation assistance.

- One full-time coordinator (an Elder) is dedicated to the Voices of the Youth newsletter program, with the support of two school instructors.

- Three practicum students are currently providing support to the newsletter initiative.

- The newsletter program is offered on an ongoing basis throughout the school year. Since the newsletter's inception, approximately 8% of the School's 52 learners have participated in the program. Most of the learners live on their own.

- Approximately 60% of the Won Ska School program content has an Aboriginal cultural orientation. On average, 20% of learners are orally fluent in an Aboriginal language.

- The newsletter initiative is funded by Saskatchewan Education until June, 1998.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

The Won Ska Cultural School's programs are attractive to "youth at risk" who want to return to school and who have difficulty achieving success in mainstream education programs. Some aspects of the school's programs, including the newsletter initiative, that learners report to like the most include: confidentiality, cultural orientation, and how the program empowers learners to feel self-worth and challenge themselves.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Aboriginal language courses offered twice in one year were not well attended. It is believed that this occurred because the courses were offered as non-credit courses.

- Personal crises encountered by learners (e.g., addictions, lifestyle)

- Needs of urban Aboriginal people are not being addressed, in that First Nations only provide support to their members living on reserves. "Need to have more political people see it through our eyes."

Honourable Mention

The following were reported to have an Aboriginal literacy program/project or literacy component in their existing programs but were not interviewed.

Lac La Ronge Indian Band
Post-Secondary Education and Employment Program
Box 480
La Ronge, Saskatchewan
S0J 1L0

♦♦♦

"To empower Aboriginal students to achieve their full potential as individuals through a student-centered, culturally and spiritually-based education program encompassing healing, learning and growing in the four dimensions — mental, physical, spiritual and emotional."

♦♦♦

Aboriginal Bridge Program
332 - 6th Avenue South East
Calgary, Alberta T2G 4S6
Tel: (403) 297-3930
Fax: (403) 297-4081
E-mail: ngoodman@avc.calgary.ab.ca

Resource Contact: Nina Goodman

Host Organization: Alberta Vocational College, Calgary

Community Served: Calgary

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Aboriginal Bridge Program was established in 1997 as a result of partnership among the Metis Nation of Alberta, Local Council #87; Treaty 7 Economic Development Corporation; and the Alberta Vocational College-Calgary. The Aboriginal Bridge Program is a two-year basic literacy pilot project designed for adults who want to obtain enough skills to compete in today's labour market. Program goals are, "to provide a safe, supportive and encouraging environment for Aboriginal students to access self-improvement on academic and social levels; to assist in establishing reliance upon Aboriginal values and problem solving techniques; to develop curriculum through Aboriginal input that will really work and be effective in a secure, lasting capacity for the Aboriginal student; to adapt non-Aboriginal learning techniques to being fully culturally acceptable and effective with this student body; and, to address academics, employment preparation techniques, health, self-esteem and other issues of importance in an integrated manner".

The literacy program includes the following components: life skills, education and personal counselling, workplace literacy, basic employment preparation, job shadowing and work experience to a maximum of five days. A full computer lab is available to participants to learn basic word processing, computer-assisted reading and other computer programs. There is a maximum program capacity of 12 learners and the program is currently full. A continuous intake policy is followed, and good attendance is mandatory. The program utilizes a "watch then do" approach and small-group and tutorial teaching strategies. Learners may, depending on their goals, be required to complete 50 hours of community volunteer work to successfully complete the program.

Program Features:

- The program has one full-time and two part-time staff.
- The program is held yearly from September to June, four days per week from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The maximum length that any one student can stay enrolled in the program is two years.
- Most (70%) of the current participants range from 25 to 39 years of age; 67% are female; and, on average, the learners have a Grade 3 level of education.
- The learners' own language and experiences, via personal journals or narratives, are used as a learning tool. Cultural themes built into the program include: Sharing Circles; an Aboriginal counsellor; culturally-relevant learning material; guest speakers; and community activities.
- The program is funded by Human Resources Development Canada via the Metis Nation of Alberta and Treaty 7 Economic Development Corporation. Program participants are financially supported through Social Services, Aboriginal Social Services or Employment Insurance.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Learners are motivated to attend the program because of: all-Aboriginal peers; comfortable and safe environment; self-paced learning; support system; and the reputation of the program. Aspects of the program that learners reportedly like most include: cultural relevance; comfort level; and recognition for accomplishments attained.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Attendance (both motivating new learners to regularly attend and encouraging those learners who have derived maximum benefit from the program to move on)
- Having learners set realistic expectations
- Learner 'baggage' handicapping their progress

Basic Upgrading Program
Yellowhead Tribal Council
17304 - 105 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5S 1G4
Tel: (403) 484-0303
Fax: (403) 481-7275

Resource Contact: Mary McGoey

Host Organization: Yellowhead Tribal Council

Community Served: Edmonton and five member First Nations of the Yellowhead Tribal Council

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Basic Upgrading Program component of the Yellowhead Tribal Council (YTC) Education Program started on a part-time basis in 1995. The YTC Education Program originated due to a need for locally-controlled community-based programs. To respond to this need, the five YTC member First Nations developed education programs dedicated to the removal of barriers that otherwise might restrict the education opportunities of their members.

The Education Program is an individualized program designed for learners functioning from basic to Grade 10 literacy levels. An accredited program, it is designed to facilitate learner readiness for employment or to assist learners in furthering their education. The program is delivered through one-on-one tutoring and small classes. It is located in a multi-purpose facility that also provides broad community-based programs in probation services, social assistance and education to urban Aboriginal people and the five member First Nations communities. Currently there are 18 learners participating in the program.

Participants' capabilities are assessed at intake by their school transcripts and the TABE test. Other components of the Education Program include: life skills, computer training; Native studies; Cree language; upgrading; career development; university/college entrance program; university transfer program; criminal justice program; and Elders support. Reporting to the Yellowhead Tribal Chief's Council, the Education Committee, made up of representatives from the five member First Nations, acts in an advisory capacity to the Education Program.

Program Features:

- The Basic Upgrading Program has two full-time and three part-time staff members.
- There are five Elders on staff part-time, with one Elder always available, to provide counselling and advisory support to the Education Program. One paid tutor is also available on site for three one-hour sessions each week for interested learners wanting extra help.
- The program is held yearly from September to June, five days per week from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Every Friday is an optional day for learners interested in obtaining extra support (e.g., tutoring, counselling, exam preparation).
- One-hundred percent of the current program participants are of Aboriginal descent. All are under 35 years of age and 50% are female.
- The program's language arts courses incorporate culturally-sensitive learning materials.
- The Education Program, which includes the literacy component, receives financial assistance from the Department of Advanced Education and Career Development.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Learners enrol in this program to improve their socio-economic conditions. Some aspects of the program that learners reportedly like most include: an Aboriginal institution; comfort associated with program; and they are accepted and respected.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Funding
- Learner attendance

Circle of Connections
5th on 5th Youth Services
435 - 5th Avenue
Lethbridge, Alberta
T1J 2B6
Tel: (403) 329-3555
Fax: (403) 380-4584
E-mail: fifth@telusplanet.net

Resource Contact: Anne Hunt

Host Organization: 5th on 5th Youth Services

Community Served: Lethbridge and surrounding communities

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Circle of Connections literacy program began in June, 1997 as a stand-alone program with integration to the 5th on 5th Youth Services, Alternate High School and the Allan Watson High School in Lethbridge.

"The mission of the 5th on 5th Youth Services is to support youth, through alternative educational programs and services, in becoming responsible, capable and caring individuals, by providing opportunities to pursue goals in academic development, social development, employment, and career development."

The program's objective is to enhance the learner's reading, writing and mathematics skills to enable each learner to obtain a job, obtain further training or attend upgrading or high-school courses. This self-paced program focuses on Aboriginal youth who have dropped out of traditional schooling prior to completing their education. Approximately 40 learners have registered in the program since its inception. There is a maximum program capacity of 30 participants and the program currently has 27 learners enrolled.

Teaching methods include a combination of group activities, individualized study and computer-assisted instruction (Plato/Pathways). One indicator of the program's success is that "Students recruit other learners." Other programs offered by 5th on 5th Youth Services include: alternate high-school program; employment/career counselling; work experience; best-matches program (self-awareness and strategy development to effectively compete in the market place); job club; life skills; hire a student; young parents program; and casual employment program. Circle of Connections has an Advisory Committee, comprised primarily of Aboriginal representatives, which meets monthly to provide program direction. Learner capabilities are assessed on program admission by using the WRAT test. Subsequent skill development is assessed on an ongoing basis and is addressed through the use of individualized action plans.

Program Features:

- The Circle of Connections literacy program is geared to learners aged 16 to 24 years who are functioning below the Grade 10 academic level and who want to better their literacy skills.
- The program has two full-time Aboriginal staff members.
- Volunteer tutorial support is provided by students affiliated with Frontier College and by a practicum student from the University of Lethbridge.
- The program runs year-round five hours per day, five days per week. It has a continuous intake practice.
- The current learners are all of Aboriginal descent. They range from 16 to 24 years of age and 60% are male. On average, learners have seven to eight years of formal schooling.
- Program content includes studies of the local Blackfoot culture and language. Napi stories have been written and illustrated by learners to help maintain their cultural identity and to communicate in the Blackfoot language. Elders are used as a program resource.
- Program funding is received as follows: 45% from Blood Tribe Outreach Program; 25% from the Wild Rose Foundation; 15% from Lethbridge Youth Foundation; and 15% from the Alberta provincial government. A project grant was also received during the past two years to conduct a needs survey.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Motivating factors for learners to enrol in this program include; development of skills for high-school entry, enhancement of cultural awareness, and development of Blackfoot language. On average, 10% of learners in any given class are literate in the Blackfoot language. Some of the program aspects that learners reportedly like the most include a safe environment, cultural emphasis, social interaction, instructional support, and the staff.

The Circle of Connections program is also focusing on establishing relationships with other Aboriginal literacy programs. The program is currently affiliated with the Alberta Literacy Coordinators Association and the Aboriginal Inter-Agency Committee.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Appropriate curriculum to meet the needs of Aboriginal youth
- Funding for program resources (materials and staff)

Napew Atoskewin (A Program for Men)
Maskwachees Cultural Centre
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Hobbema, Alberta
T0C 1N0
Tel: (403) 585-3925
Fax: (403) 585-2080
E-mail: mcc@www.wtc.wtc.ccinet.ab.ca

Resource Contact: Sidney Cottell

Host Organization: Maskwachees Cultural College

Community Served: Four First Nations Communities – Ermineskin, Louis Bull, Samson Cree Nation and Montana Band

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Napew Atoskewin (a program for men) literacy program was introduced at the Maskwachees College in 1997 to meet the identified need in the community to "provide an opportunity for men who are not currently committed to training or employment to explore four key sources of strength: significance, competence, power and virtue".

The Maskwachees Cultural College "bases its philosophy, its process, and its functioning on the values, wisdom teachings and beliefs of the Cree culture. By using Cree culture as its foundation, the college provides its services to all First Nations cultures. The Senate of Elders of the college has requested that the college focus its work on the realization of self-determination of First Nations peoples through cultural and academic instruction and through the development of skills and abilities needed by First Nations".

The college offers programs at the university, college and high-school levels. The focus of the Napew Atoskewin program is to address issues which affect Aboriginal men, including their roles and responsibilities. The program is also designed to rebuild and maintain their "source of strength". The program includes Cree culture, Cree language, English, mathematics, science, computer, and personal development courses. It has a 50/50 cultural/academic content mix. Learners may earn recognized English and mathematics credits. Courses are delivered in an informal classroom atmosphere where the focus is primarily on the people, their identity and life roles. The program is offered on an as-needed basis, and is now in its third running. Class sizes have ranged from 12 to 20 learners. There are no academic admission requirements and the program accepts all literacy skill levels. The Board of Governors for the college is made up completely of Aboriginal members.

Program Features:

- The Napew Atoskewin program is a full-time (Monday to Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:50 p.m.) four-month program with one full-time staff member and part-time cultural instructors.

- Twenty-five percent of program participants range in age from 16 to 24 years; 55% are from 25 to 39; and 20% are from 40 to 59. On average, learners have six years of formal schooling. Most learners are receiving social service benefits.

- Participants are required to take one Cree language and one cultural course to successfully complete the program. Two Elders, both a male and female, and a social worker (counsellor) are available to learners on site. A psychologist visits the college on a weekly basis.

- The program is totally funded by the four Hobbema First Nations.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Staff believe learners' reasons for enrolling in this program include: referral agency requirement that learners attend, to continue to receive social assistance; boredom; to turn their lives around; and, as a follow-up to addictions treatment. The aspect of the program which learners reportedly like most is its cultural content (Cree language and focus on identity and history). Most program participants are unable to speak Cree. Of concern to the program is participants' attendance, which is often adversely affected by such factors as lifestyle, addictions, or family crises.

Readiness Program
Alberta Vocational College - Lesser Slave Lake
Grouard Campus
Bag 3000
Grouard, Alberta
T0G 1C0
Tel: (403) 432-6885
Fax: (403) 751-3375

Resource Contact: Jackie Kellock

Host Organization: Alberta Vocational College - Lesser Slave Lake

Community Served: North-central Alberta

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Alberta Vocational College - Lesser Slave Lake provides academic upgrading programs to communities in north-central Alberta. The college's student population is approximately 70% Aboriginal. The college introduced a community-based Readiness Program in 1996, in response to an identified need to help learners successfully prepare for academic upgrading or employment training. While this program is geared to learners at all literacy skill levels, the focus is at the basic literacy level. Topics covered include: basic communication skills; goal-setting strategies; time and money management; life-management skills; planning and problem solving; self-esteem building; employability skills; certification courses (e.g., First Aid/CPR); and academic upgrading. Instruction is provided through the use of one-on-one and small-group instruction, and tutors.

To ensure community involvement in the development of community-based college programs, a network of Community Education Committees (CECs) has been established. AVC - Lesser Slave Lake currently has 21 such committees. The CECs deal with the 21 campuses in the college's service area and their membership draws regionally from at least 30 communities. CEC members are nominated by First Nations, the Metis Nation, Metis settlements, towns, community associations, community agencies, municipal districts, students, and other specialized organizations that have a significant role to play in the community. Most CEC members are Aboriginal, since the majority of students and residents in the college's service area are Aboriginal.

The role of the CECs is to: identify, assess, and set priorities for needed adult education services; promote available adult education services; recruit and select adult learners;

select staff; evaluate service delivery, and make recommendations. A Council of Community Education Committees has also been established. This council is comprised of the representatives of all of the respective CECs. One of the objectives of the council is to further "the cultural, artistic and linguistic aspirations of the people in the region through the provision of facilities, programming and materials which can help to ensure the survival of their heritage".

Program Features:

- The Readiness Program has four full-time staff. Aboriginal tutors are drawn from the university college programs that require student practicum placements. A 'buddy system' is used with learners at a low literacy level.

- The program is eight weeks in length (full days) and is offered on an as-needed ongoing basis, depending on community needs and resource availability.

- The current learners, all of Aboriginal ancestry, range from 25 to 39 years of age, and 65% are female.

- In addition to the CEC model, Aboriginal community involvement in the program may include: community speakers; Elder involvement; Chief and Council attendance at graduations; and learner assignments that require students to research their culture, traditions or history.

- The program is funded by the Student Finance Board and respective First Nations.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Program participants are primarily referred to the Readiness Program by First Nations, Metis settlements, communities, Social Services, Detoxification Centre, the Friendship Centre, the courts, Family Community and Social Services; and self-referrals. Aspects of the program which learners reportedly like most include: making learning fun; comfortable and supportive learning environment; trust building; and treating students with respect.

An issue of concern is:

- ensuring quality program delivery (i.e., course content and instructors) and that it meets the learners' needs.

Red Crow Community College Literacy Program
Box 1258
Cardston, Alberta
T0K 0K0
Tel: (403) 737-2400
Fax: (403) 737-2101

Resource Contact: Roy Weasel Fat

Host Organization: Red Crow Community College

Community Served: Blood Tribe First Nation

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Red Crow College is located on the Blood Tribe reserve at the former First Mary's Residential School. The college was established in 1986 as an Adult Learning Centre offering an upgrading program at the upper-elementary level. The college's adult literacy program was subsequently established in February 1994, to meet the needs of adults 18 years of age and older preparing for the regular upgrading program or wanting to acquire basic reading, writing and numeracy skills. During the development of this program, a literature review was conducted, "aimed at identifying the components of successful Native literacy programming which contribute to active and wholescale participation of potential literacy learners". The program's philosophy that instructors must know their students is closely modeled after the John Dewey ideology of progressivism.

The literacy program is flexible and individualized, using both one-on-one and classroom instruction. The program's content has been designed to meet the academic and social needs of its learners. At the onset, the program recruited its learners from the reserve's Social Services, Kainai Corrections and Family Community Support Services programs. However, in the last two years, no recruiting has been required. The members of Red Crow Community College's Board of Governors are all Aboriginal people from the Blood Tribe of the Blackfoot Nation. The Board of Governors also has an Elders Advisory Committee.

Program Features:

- The Adult Learning Centre has two program levels. One is for learners functioning below the Grade 5 level, which includes core courses in social studies, mathematics, language arts and science. The other is for learners functioning at the Grades 5 to 8 level, focusing on upgrading. In addition to the literacy and upgrading programs, the centre's programs include: life skills (ten weeks duration); cooperative education; and, career exploration, as well as the outreach courses offered by other education institutions on site. The career exploration course aids learners in their goal setting.

- The literacy program has three full-time staff members.

- The program is held from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. for nine months each year. An open enrolment policy is used (i.e., a continuous intake and exit). Learners are not turned away or suspended for lack of attendance or for academic reasons.

- The median age of program participants is 25 to 40 years and 70% are male. The average grade level attained prior to enrolment is Grade 4. All program participants are Aboriginal.

- The program incorporates locally-developed culturally-relevant curriculum material (i.e., Blackfoot language and history courses). An integral part of the program learning is the enhancement of the learners' cultural identity.

- The Red Crow Community College is totally funded by the Department of Indian and Northern Development.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Younger students enrol in the literacy program to enable them to further their education, while older students more often enrol simply to improve their basic literacy skills. Aspects of the program reported to be most liked by learners include on-reserve delivery of services, and classroom atmosphere. The school residence is available for learners and helps address attendance and housing/family issues which may impact learner program performance.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Motivating the community to volunteer (e.g., volunteer tutors)

- Need assistance in dealing with a range of learners' problems (e.g., attendance, family issues, housing issues, substance abuse, unemployment)

Empowering Through Literacy
Chemainus Native College
Box 730
Ladysmith, British Columbia
V0R 2E0
Tel: (250) 245-3522
Fax: (250) 245-8263
E-mail: jesmith@island.net

Resource Contact: Jack Smith

Host Organization: Chemainus Native College

Community Served: Five First Nations communities

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Chemainus Native College was established by the Chemainus Tribal Council in 1985. The college is registered as a private post-secondary training institute and as an independent school with the British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training. The College's mission is, "to create and sustain a learning environment that is conducive to Native learning; an environment that is community focused on the educational needs of Native people. Such an environment must be sensitive to Native history, culture and tradition and must provide relevant and high-quality academic programs and training". The College endeavours to "offer academic programs that are credible and aligned with the skill demands of employers so that the graduates" are prepared to "make valued contributions to their work, to their communities and to greater society".

The college's secondary program serves First Nation youth and adult learners working toward obtaining their Grade 12 diploma. A cultural component is integrated into the academic course studies. Results of assessment testing conducted at the college from 1994 to 1996 indicated that 70% of the students had skills below the Grade 10 level. The Empowering Through Literacy adult literacy project was subsequently introduced (1996) to research and pilot a volunteer peer-tutoring model for learners participating in the college's secondary program. The Empowering Through Literacy project is "a program delivery intervention based on training the staff to work as learning coaches to students using literacy enhancement techniques from the Vancouver Learning Centre".

The program is seen as a community learning model, in that learners will ultimately pass their skills on in the community. Sixty Aboriginal learners are currently participating in the college's secondary program. Learners' skill levels are assessed at intake by using the CAAT and Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. In addition to the courses geared to high- school completion and literacy, Chemainus Native College also offers English upgrading, college preparation and business skills certification, as well as diplomas in management studies, community economic development and Aboriginal adult instruction. The college has an all-Aboriginal Board of Directors.

Program Features:

- The Empowering Through Literacy pilot project is using specific interventions to train teachers to coach volunteers and learners to become peer tutors. Learners are at all literacy levels. The "each one teach one" approach trains people how to learn and, in turn, they learn how to teach.

- The equivalent of one-and-one-half full-time staff are dedicated to the project.

- The college's secondary program's 60 current learners range from 14 to 45 years of age. There is a 30/70 male/female mix. Fourteen of the current learners have been identified to be trained as future volunteer peer tutors.

- The secondary program is held yearly from September to June, Monday to Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. It has a continuous intake practice.

- An Elders Committee acts in an advisory capacity to the college and as a counselling resource to learners. All curriculum used, where possible, has First Nations content.

- The Empowering Through Literacy pilot project is cost shared among the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training; NLS; and Chemainus Native College.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Learners are reportedly attracted to enrol in this program for the following reasons: a First Nation's school; an accredited program; and, the cultural and academic mix of the program. Some aspects of the program most liked by participants include the learning environment, and the learning approach taken. Continuity of program funding is a problem for the program.

Hungry for Knowledge
Eslha7'an Learning Centre
Squamish Nation School
345 West 5th Street
North Vancouver, British Columbia
V7M 1K2
Tel: (604) 985-7711
Fax: (604) 985-9870

Resource Contact: Kelly Berry, Aaron Nelson-Moody, Cultural Teacher, Squamish Nation School

Host Organization: Squamish First Nation

Communities Served: Three urban reserves of the Squamish Nation, lower mainland & lower Vancouver area

Program Mission & Objectives:

The program offered through Hungry for Knowledge is part of a multi-tiered approach intended to accommodate a variety of clientele. Established in 1990 as part of the Squamish Nation School located in North Vancouver, the program offers four distinct education streams: two are intended for 'school-aged' students. A third is targeted at adolescents (aged 16 to 18) who are experiencing difficulties, or have returned to school to complete their GEDs. The fourth is specifically designed for Adult Basic Education, and its goal is to help its students gain a stronger sense of self-esteem, to acquire essential life-skills and to complete their GEDs.

The program's success is due, in part, to its combination of traditional classroom methods and individual, self-paced learning.

Both the Squamish Nation and the local school board are involved in policy-making and program development for Hungry for Knowledge.

Program Features:

- The program's education profile enriches the standard BC curriculum with a strong Aboriginal orientation. Courses in basic literacy are complemented with courses on ancestral languages, and integrate Aboriginal themes into the general curriculum. The learning environment consists mainly of the typical classroom setting, but a strong emphasis is placed upon self-paced learning. Access to individual tutoring and peer assistance is readily available.

- At present, the program's staff consists of one full-time and three part-time facilitators, who have access as well to the administrative support resources of the larger school. In addition, the Hungry for Knowledge program also makes use of the Squamish Nation School's full-time cultural teacher, who is responsible for the integration of Aboriginal culture into the standard curriculum.

- Currently, 13 adult students are enrolled in the program. Most are Aboriginal, the majority are female (many are single mothers determined to upgrade their education for economic purposes). The average age of the participants is 30 years.

- As with all elements of the Squamish Nation School, the Hungry for Knowledge program adheres to the BC curriculum, and is accredited with the North Vancouver School Board. Upon successful completion of the program, students graduate with a GED.

- The program follows the typical school year; classes are offered during the day from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

- Primary funding comes from the Squamish First Nation, with assistance from DIAND, the BC government, and the local school board. In addition, all curriculum materials, supplies, computers, etc. are provided by the Squamish Nation. One further noteworthy point – the program is unusual simply because it reports that its funding is adequate!

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Certainly most students enrolled in the Hungry for Knowledge program would agree that their motivation for pursuing their studies is primarily economic. Most want to improve their job prospects and provide a better standard of living for themselves and their children. But equally important is the fact that the program also stresses Aboriginal cultural values. The school's full-time cultural coordinator incorporates Squamish language and culture into the learning experience. Field trips are organized, talking circles and contact with tribal elders are important elements in the program. These, along with the secure, familiar learning environment, are major attractions for its student clientele. Further advantages of the program include child day-care – a must for many adult students – and availability of local accommodation.

The Squamish First Nations also play a pivotal role in the life of the school; not only does it fund the school, but it provides essential support of the program and offers access to a wider network of educators.

Native Literacy Centre - Family Literacy Program
Native Education Centre
285 East 5th Avenue
Vancouver, British Columbia
V5T 1H2
Tel: (604) 873-3772
Fax: (604) 873-9152

Resource Contact: Lorraine Fox

Host Organization: Native Education Centre

Community Served: Greater Vancouver

Program Mission & Objectives:

The Native Education Centre is a private post-secondary institution. Managed and controlled by Aboriginals, it was established in 1967 as an adult education facility to address the adult basic education and literacy needs of Aboriginal people. The centre provides a culturally-sensitive basic education curriculum to the Grade 12 level. An integral part of the Native Education Centre, the Native Literacy Centre provides First Nations youth and adults with an opportunity to learn reading and writing skills, with a focus on basic learning from Grades 1 to 7. Learners can choose to work on a one-on-one or group-tutoring basis or attend drop-in classes. Native Literacy Centre program referrals are assessed by means of an interview and CAAT test.

Since inception, Native Literacy Centre activities and programs have continued to be developed. In the recent past, the centre has developed an employment skills manual and offered "Working Words", an employment literacy program for Aboriginal youth. Currently the centre is in its third year of offering a community-based Family Literacy Program, in partnership with Vancouver Community College. Five learners are currently enrolled in this initiative. This program works closely with local schools to identify potential requirements of youth who may need help in their reading. The youths' parents may then be recruited to the Family Literacy Program to become tutors for their children. The program's holistic approach includes community cultural and social activities (e.g., learner attendance at pow-wows, Aboriginal political events, visits to the Museum of Anthropology, and the local library); Elder involvement; Family Reading Circles; and health and nutrition instruction.

Program Features:

- The Native Literacy Centre has one full-time staff member. Currently, there are six Aboriginal volunteers who act as tutors or assist in small-group sessions.

- The Family Literacy Program is held four days per week from 9:00 a.m. to noon. One Cree language class is held on Thursday evenings for two hours. Cultural classes are held on Friday mornings (e.g., art, beading, drum making, blanket making).

- The current learners range from 16 to 39 years of age. Sixty percent are female. The program has a maximum enrolment of ten learners and a continuous intake practice.

- Visiting Elders act as a support service to both learners and staff, and provide a direct link to traditional cultural practices.

- The Family Literacy Program is cost shared by the federal government, National Literacy Secretariat, and the provincial government, Ministry of Education, Skills and Training. Funding will terminate in June, 1998 but the Family Literacy component will be retained with further development (i.e., curriculum resources/ community partnerships).

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

The flexible and individualized nature of the program attracts learners. They enrol because they "want to have another chance to learn reading and writing for their own use". Some of the aspects of the program that learners reportedly like most include: cultural content; being with other Aboriginal people; Aboriginal events hosted by the Centre; Aboriginal learning material content; and a sense of security.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Funding

- Declining registration numbers

- Physical space

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
2196 Quilchena Drive
Box 399
Merritt, British Columbia
V1K 1B8
Tel: (250) 378-3351
(250) 378-3351 [Prest]
Fax: (250) 378-3332

Resource Contact: Gordon Prest

Host Organization: Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

Community Served: First Nation communities in the area

Program Mission & Objectives:

Somewhat unique in its mission, the Native Basic Adult Education program at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) is designed to cater primarily to students seeking college-level and career-oriented courses. For this reason, it must be considered an advanced-level program whose objective reaches beyond the acquisition of fundamental literacy skills. Programs lead to college-level certificates and diplomas, and include math, science, indigenous studies, English and reading skills.

Students participating in the program are motivated primarily by a desire to improve their economic status through career-track education. Two college-level programs in particular, Natural Resources and Social Work, have proven to be extremely popular with the predominantly Aboriginal student population. Moreover, NVIT has proven attractive to its population precisely because of its emphasis on support for the adult Aboriginal student.

Some programs have been specially packaged for the First Nations communities, and are intended to provide transitional assistance to students planning to pursue college-level work, although none are currently offered. The Institute's Native Adult Basic Education (NABE) program was begun in 1980 and is specifically designed as a preliminary and transitional route into the college and vocational courses that are NVIT's mainstay.

Representatives of the First Nation communities are responsible for the development and supervision of NVIT's programs.

Program Features:

- NVIT's Adult Basic Education program is staffed by one full-time and four part-time educators.

- NVIT attracts its students from across BC and Canada; in fact, students from the local community of Merritt are a minority in the ABE program. Its clientele currently consists of 30 adult students, most of whom are Aboriginal, all of whom are registered in the program as full-time students. Slightly more than half are women.

- The program's learning style blends conventional teaching methods with some recognition of the Aboriginal community's special needs. New students are assessed through the Canadian Achievement Test. NVIT's learning environment combines both the classroom/lecture setting with individual tutoring. The duration of the program is eight months.

- Nicola Valley's NABE program generally adheres to the basic BC curriculum, and the courses are accredited with the BC Department of Education. However, attempts have been made to incorporate Aboriginal elements into the existing curriculum. First Nations authors, for example, are now included in NVIT's English programs.

- Current funding is provided by the provincial government as well as individual support of the First Nation communities.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

It should be emphasized that NVIT's program assumes that basic literacy skills have already been acquired; and that the student has attained a level of proficiency that allows for college-level study, thereby opening the door to career-track education. As such it must be considered an advanced-level program designed to build upon fundamental literacy skills.

Perhaps NVIT's most attractive feature is the supportive environment within which Aboriginal students can pursue their studies. Students work closely with each other, often providing much-needed confidence and support as they work within a fairly formal academic environment. Virtually all students recognize the fact that an education upgrade will have a real and positive effect upon their economic status. Most clearly intend to continue studies beyond their high-school equivalency certificates, and pursue the college-level programs offered at NVIT .

Project Refocus
Prince George Native Friendship Centre
1600 Third Avenue
Prince George, British Columbia
V2L 3G6
Tel: (250) 563-4405
Fax: (250) 564-0658

Resource Contact: Barbara Ward-Burkitt

Host Organization: Prince George Native Friendship Centre

Community Served: Prince George and surrounding communities

Program Mission & Objectives:

Established in 1988, Project Refocus is a community-based adult basic education program for Aboriginal learners delivered by the Prince George Native Friendship Centre. The Centre's vision is, "We are a dynamic team facilitating individual, family and community growth through the power of friendship".

A partnership between the Prince George Friendship Centre and the Open Learning Agency, Project Refocus is designed for learners upgrading at the intermediate level (i.e., Grades 8 to 10). Academic upgrading courses are accredited at the fundamental and intermediate levels and articulated with provincial ABE guidelines. Potential candidates must be of Aboriginal ancestry; 19 years of age or older; willing to deal with issues and circumstances that have hindered their personal progress, including employment; be committed to supporting group processes and making the necessary changes in their attitudes, lifestyle, and expectations; be ready to set goals and to take responsibility for striving to reach them; and, have a desire to access education, training, and/or employment opportunities.

The program has a specific literacy component designed to provide support to those learners tested at functioning below the Grade 8 level. Learners tested at a very low literacy level may be referred to the local College of New Caledonia literacy program. Project Refocus currently has 20 participants. On average, approximately 40 to 50% of the learners are usually in need of literacy support. For program admission, the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) is administered to assess a learner's academic abilities and an interview is conducted to assess their goals. The program offers both one-on-one tutoring and small classes.

Other components of Project Refocus include: life skills; job preparation; computer training; work placements; career counselling and skills enhancement training (i.e.,

certification training). Upgrading is seen as only one component in the program but rather following a more holistic approach (working on self, creating a safe environment and gaining trust) is critical to ensure learners' succeed. The program is overseen by the Friendship Centre's Board of Directors, 75% of whom are of Aboriginal descent. Learners are actively involved in community fundraising events to offset field trip expenses. They also do volunteer work at agencies to assist in their personal development.

Program Features:

- Five full-time and one part-time staff are dedicated to Project Refocus.
- There are no volunteer tutors used in this program. Existing partnerships with the local Dyslexia Association, Voluntary Adult Literacy Training Program and involvement on a community literacy committee provides the literacy resources needed to support the Centre's literacy needs.
- The program is held for ten months each year, four days per week from 8:55 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., with each Friday designated as an access day for learners.
- Current learners range from 16 to 55 years of age; 60% are female; and, on average, each has eight years of prior formal schooling.
- An in-house program curriculum has been developed to ensure that learning material is appropriate and relevant to Aboriginal learners' values and traditions. The curriculum is accredited through the Open Learning agency.
- Elders are also used extensively in all areas of the program (e.g., Program Advisory Committee, hiring committees, story-telling to learners, presentations, attending regular events, learner graduation).
- Under the Regional Bilateral Agreements signed with regional and representative organizations in British Columbia, 100% financial assistance is provided to Project Refocus by the Ministry of Human Resources Development of Canada.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Participants are attracted to this program because of: word-of-mouth referrals from former students; the culturally-relevant curriculum; the skills-enhancement training courses; work placements; and the opportunity to improve their sense of self-esteem. Aspects of the program that learners reportedly like most include: Aboriginal learners and staff; curriculum; environment; class size; non-institutional environment; and no tuition fees. Of concern to the program is the absence of core and continuous funding.

Sechelt Indian Band Educational Centre
Sechelt First Nation
PO Box 740
Sechelt First Nation, British Columbia
V0N 3A0
Tel: (604) 885-6016
Fax: (604) 885-6071

Resource Contact: Michael Sadler, Director of Adult Education
(Current Director is Kate Cole, 1998)

Host Organization: Sechelt First Nation

Community Served: Sechelt First Nation community

Program Mission & Objectives:

Established in 1995, the Sechelt Adult Education Centre offers a straightforward, "back-to-basics" approach to adult literacy and basic life skills. Its mission, according to the Director of Adult Education, is to provide Aboriginal students with the basic academic background necessary to pursue career-track programs: "Why don't we set our sights on becoming lawyers, dentists or computer engineers? We can do better than being on social assistance." For this reason, the program's teaching methods are fairly conventional, using a combination of classroom lectures and independent study.

Due to its focus on literacy and academic elements, Sechelt's program incorporates relatively little in the way of Aboriginal issues or culture. Sadler elaborates on this point: "Look, they are here to get the basics, to get their academic standards up so they have a better chance of making it out there. At this point in their lives, they are not interested in making baskets."

However, the assessment process allows for some consideration for Aboriginal heritage. Students are admitted into the Sechelt program on the basis of a rather creative intake assessment developed by the Open Learning Agency. The assessment places a strong emphasis on the applicant's Aboriginal cultural experience while at the same time accomplishing its main purpose, namely literacy testing. Following her assessment, the learner is given a basic program geared to her current abilities. She is expected to work independently with peer and instructor support, in addition to the usual classroom regimen.

All of its learners are drawn from the Sechelt community which, under the authority of the Sechelt First Nations, in cooperation with local education authorities provides the program's governance. The curriculum itself is accredited with the provincial Department of Education.

Program Features:

- The education profile of the program emphasizes the basic literacy skills; reading, writing, arithmetic, with comparatively little emphasis on Aboriginal cultural activities. The program is accredited through the local community college and recognized by the BC Department of Education. It is therefore able to offer a number of diplomas and certificates, including the high-school equivalency certificate.

- Staff consists of one full-time teacher and one part-time staff member. In addition, the program makes use of the facilities and administrative services of the Adult Education Centre in Sechelt.

- There are currently 24 adult learners in the program; all but one is a member of the First Nations, and only three are men. The average functional grade level is Grade 9.

- The length of program is fairly standard. The courses run during the normal school year; hours are full-time, i.e., 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

- Like most of its BC counterparts, Sechelt is well supported. Funding arrangements are varied, with the bulk of education costs covered by Sechelt First Nation. Further funding is derived from federal and provincial programs, though in many respects, virtually all funding is regulated through the Band. It should be noted that members of the community who leave the reserve (and hence the literacy program) receive no further funding.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

In the past, the Sechelt ABE program has received NLS funding. It was applied to the publication of a Sechelt reader designed for use in its basic literacy program.

With respect to support and networking for the staff and program facilitators, Sadler remarked that he and his staff benefit from an affiliation with similar Aboriginal literacy programs in the province. He notes that they feel well connected to their BC counterparts through a series of annual conferences and training opportunities.

As with most Adult Basic Education programs, students are attracted to Sechelt's program by their desire to increase employability, and upgrade the standard of living both for themselves and their children. Although maintaining student motivation is a typical problem, many student concerns are addressed. Staff and peer support for the students is strong; child day-care arrangements are made – and these help to make the program "do-able" for its students. Developing self-esteem among the students is also a crucial component of the program's objectives. Sadler observes, "You have to let the students get a taste of success so that they will want to stay with the program and continue their education."

Secwepemc Education Institute
Sepwepemc Cultural Education Society
Kamloops Indian Reserve
335 Yellowhead Highway
Kamloops, British Columbia
V2H 1H1
Tel: (250) 828-9779
Fax: (250) 372-1127

Resource Contact: Janice Michelle, Adult Education Coordinator & Program Administrator

Host Organization: Kamloops Band Council

Community Served: Secwepemc's clientele is remarkably widespread: attracting students not only from the immediate region but from across BC and Western Canada.

Program Mission & Objectives:

Secwemepc offers a multi-level, comprehensive adult education program designed to meet the needs of First Nations adult learners at various education levels. Its overall mission is to provide its Aboriginal adult population with the programs and environment necessary to upgrade their education and, consequently, their employability.

Ranging from fundamental to advanced streams, Secwepemc offers several programs: Secwepemc Adult Fundamental Education (SAFE) offers basic literacy and life skills for First Nations adults planning to enter the work force. The program provides students with fundamental reading, writing and numeracy skills. In addition, ancestral language courses are taught. Another part of its mission is to promote self-reliance, cultural pride and employment of Aboriginal skills. All students are required to participate in the life-skills and work-placement components of the program.

The Secwepemc Adult General Education (SAGE) program provides upgrading for Grades 10 through 12. A variety of courses are offered. In addition to English, mathematics and Shuswap language, courses are offered in science, social science, law, geography, history, business management, career planning, and life skills. All courses in this program are accredited with the provincial Department of Education and lead to a high-school equivalency certificate.

The third of Secwepemc's adult education projects is its college and university preparation program. First Nations Access to University, Trades & Technology (FNAUTT) offers a standard set of preparatory courses for students who plan to pursue post-secondary education. It leads to an accredited college certificate.

Requirements for admission to Secwepemc's programs are fairly standard. All students must be at least 19 years of age, committed to full-time attendance, and willing to write the Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT) to assess admission and placement. Admission to the various programs is based on assessments that include both the CAAT and a series of personal interviews.

Program Features:

- Secwepemc is staffed by five full-time teachers and two part-time staff.
- There are currently 40 students enrolled in the various adult programs. They range in age from 25 to 35 years; 75% are women. The majority are Aboriginal.
- The program duration is eight months, and runs from September through April. Students are expected to attended classes on a full-time basis (i.e., 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.). Its methodology includes small, conventional-style classes combined with one-on-one and peer tutoring.
- Focus on Aboriginal culture and heritage is a mainstay of the programs. For this reason, the basic provincial curriculum is considerably enhanced with a variety of Aboriginal elements. In addition to the inclusion of ancestral Aboriginal language courses, Aboriginal material is incorporated into other courses. Janice Michelle points out, "In our English language course, we use all-Native authors – not just as role models but for the content and the Native way of looking at the world."
- Funding is provided by Secwepemc First Nation. Students on social assistance are not penalized for participating in the program. In addition, students in the SAGE and SAFE programs are encouraged to register with Native Outreach to secure financial support.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

As is the case with most adult learners, students at Secwepemc are motivated largely by the realities of the workforce. The education-means-employment philosophy is a very strong motivating factor for the mostly-female members of the school community. As well, self-esteem is very much a motivating factor among many students.

Students are attracted to Secwepemc from across Western Canada. Along with its solid academic profile, the program offers an Aboriginally-enriched curriculum, and a safe, welcoming environment – all of which are crucial elements for its Aboriginal adult population. Students are further drawn by the personal support and attention offered by each of the instructors. Its strongest suit is its ability to adapt to the needs of its students. "The ability of any of us to learn is shaped by the environment we live in. We try to adapt our program to that environment, and not the other way around."

Native Adult Basic Education
Victoria Native Friendship Centre
220 Bay Street
Victoria, British Columbia
V9A 3K5
Tel: (250) 384-3211
Fax: (250) 384-1586

Resource Contact: Carol Aileen

Host Organization: Victoria Native Friendship Centre

Community Served: Victoria and surrounding communities

Program Mission & Objectives:

In 1992, the Victoria Native Friendship Centre assumed responsibility for administering and delivering the Native Adult Basic Education program. The program's primary goal is "to encourage a sense of responsibility, a spirit of confidence, an attitude of cooperation, and a positive First Nations identity among students".

The Native Adult Basic Education program is a non-credited program designed to meet the education needs of First Nations adult learners who wish to upgrade to the intermediate level (i.e., Grade 10) or write their GED exams. The program has a specific literacy component to provide support to those learners tested at below the Grade 10 level. Learners tested at a very low literacy level are referred to the local READ Society and to Project Literacy Victoria. Generally, 50% of the participants in a given class require intermediate literacy skill development. The Centre is considering developing a basic literacy program for adults and youth. A total of 16 learners are enrolled in the current basic education program (maximum class size). On average, 95% of the program's participants are Aboriginal learners.

The Adult Basic Education program's intake involves an interview and CAAT testing. The program has a strong cultural component to complement the academic course studies and is further supported by a combined life-skills and study-skills program. Computer training (self-directed or one-on-one), correspondence courses, job preparation and other certification courses (e.g., Food Safe, First Aid, customer service training) are also integrated into the basic education program. Other programs and services offered at the Friendship Centre include: a ten-week life-skills program; job club; career wheel/job readiness program; computer training; addictions counselling; child and family services; and street outreach.

Program Features:

- There is one full-time and eight part-time staff dedicated to the Native Adult Basic Education Program.
- The current 16 learners average 30 years of age and possess eight years of formal schooling. Participants are usually single parents receiving social assistance.
- The program is offered each year from September to June, Monday to Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. It has a continuous intake practice.
- Learners and program staff have access to Elders who are on staff at the Friendship Centre in support roles in the Alcohol and Drug Program.
- The program's cultural component provides learners with a better understanding of the meaning of culture and the important role culture plays in their lives. The cultural component draws upon local artists and carvers to teach such things as the making of drums, cedar-bark baskets, blankets, and wall hangings. Talking Circles are also used throughout the program.
- The Native Adult Basic Education program is funded by the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training. Learners also participate in various fund-raising activities (e.g., bake sales, car washes, raffles).

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Motivating factors for learners to enrol in this program include: to get a good job; get off welfare; and being able to help their children with their homework. Some of the program aspects learners reportedly like most are: the art work; history; and, political science, as it relates to their culture.

Some issues of concern to the program are:

- Lack of program stability. Need to reapply for funding every year. Funding issues affect both staffing and learners.
- "Trying to be all things to all people"
- Need for adequate and appropriate space

The following were reported to have an Aboriginal literacy program/project or literacy component in their existing programs but were not interviewed.

Reading Mastery
TL'AZT'EN Nation Learning Centre
Box 670
Fort St. James, British Columbia
V0J 1P0
Tel: (250) 648-3227
Fax: (250) 648-3288

Teaching Literacy Through the Elder's Voice
Muskoti Learning Centre
PO Box 160
Moberly Lake, British Columbia
V0C 1X0
Tel: (250) 788-9754
Fax: (250) 788-9347

♦♦♦

"We have to re-name disability...

these people are in an uphill struggle to break the cycle."

♦♦♦

Breaking New Ground
Mundessa Development Corporation
Box 32081
Whitehorse, Yukon Territories
Y1A 5P9
Tel: (867) 633-6938
Fax: (867) 633-6938
E-mail: jgbaker@edu.polarcom.com

YUKON

Resource Contact: Mr. James G. Baker, Program Coordinator and Adult Educator

Host Organization: Mundessa Development Corporation

Community Served: Adult learners of the Ta'an First Nation.

Program Mission & Objectives:

Breaking New Ground is a new, innovative, computer-directed program designed to help Ta'an First Nations people get a recognized high-school diploma from the Yukon Territorial Government. The program does not offer 'upgrading' in the traditional sense, but rather an advanced technology, the 'Pathfinders' computer program, which explains, instructs and tests learners in the BC/Yukon high-school curriculum until they demonstrate mastery (80% or more) of a given subject at a given level, before allowing them to proceed to more advanced levels. Learners are able to complete, at their own pace and directed by the computerized system, all required and optional credits to earn their high-school diploma.

The program and equipment have only been operational since February 1998, with 11 participants, which is the maximum capacity given the space and equipment available. Learners are assessed for placement by the Educator through both personal consultation and CAAT testing. Then they are introduced to the software, and the Educator continues to monitor progress and adjust the level of instruction to one appropriate for each individual. The program is managed by the executive of the Mundessa Development Corporation, which is the economic development branch of the Ta'an First Nation.

Program Features:

- The program offers all required courses from Grades 8 to 12 following the BC/Yukon Territorial Curriculum: learners are required to complete credit courses in English, math, sciences, social sciences and career planning, as well as a choice of optional credit courses such as consumer education, business, law, biology, chemistry, physics, etc. In addition, learners must take a four-week life-skills course.

- There are two full-time staff, both Aboriginal: the program coordinator/educator who is present to help students where needed and to monitor their progress, and a full-time Community Education Liaison Coordinator who looks after human relations, job-placement, workshops and field trips. The computer and learners do the rest.

- Learners are 'in school' 7.5 hours a day, five days a week for approximately 42 weeks.

- All learners are members of the Ta'an First Nation. There are currently four learners from 16 to 24 years old, and seven learners from 25 to 39 years old. There are six men and five women.

- Teaching method is self/computer-directed learning, using the BC/Yukon high-school curriculum. Because the program is very new, specific Aboriginal content has not yet been introduced. But the software is very adaptable and given time and resources, Aboriginal themes, literature and history could easily be incorporated.

- The large financial commitment to acquire the hardware, software, licenses, space and staff has come exclusively from the Mundessa Development Corporation's allocation of its Pathways funding. It is estimated that only 1% has been contributed by the Yukon Government, and none from the federal government or other sources.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Breaking New Ground is a very new initiative, which eventually would like to open its doors to learners from other First Nations communities. The demand is very high, because of its unique features: it offers a self-directed learning environment where they can progress at their own pace towards a recognized high-school diploma. Whereas some learners have attended college ABE courses for years without seeing a lot of progress, here they can move towards their learning objectives much more quickly with this intensive, one-on-one, computer-directed system. Both the computer itself and the Educator give regular and frequent feed-back and reports to learners on how they are progressing through their various subjects. Learners also learn a great deal about computers while they are getting their academics. In the words of the Coordinator/Educator: "Our computer-based program is the most advanced of its kind available in the Yukon – Pathfinders 'Nautikos' for Windows 95¼I have never received training, but taught myself to use the system and do programming. Anyone could do it. I didn't love computers before, but now I have learned so much."

The establishment of this program has required a high degree of commitment and vision of the part of the executive of the Mundessa Development Corporation, which has invested some $170,000 in the computer hardware and software to run the Pathfinders program, without additional financial assistance of either the Territorial or federal governments. The Corporation also has to ensure the operation of the program and the salaries of staff. Our discussions with Aboriginal educators in the Territory reflect a common sense that the Yukon Government perceives the establishment of this and other Aboriginal literacy or upgrading initiatives as a threat to the public college system, which it has established to meet the needs of all adult learners. Therefore, it is an issue remaining to be addressed as to whether or how the Yukon government will accredit students, once they have met the requirements for their high-school diploma.

Another challenge faced by the program is finding space to house the program. The program currently functions out of a few small offices of the Mundessa Development Corporation, which are not adequate for present needs, and it is hoped that the program will be expanded in the future so that more learners can be accommodated.

Lower Post Community Literacy Program
Dena Le eh Learning Centre
Box 489
Watson Lake, Yukon
Y0A 1C0
Tel: 250 779 3191
Fax: 250 779 3371
E-Mail: lpfn@watson.net

Resource Contact: Suzanne Hale

Host Organization: Lower Post First Nation, Northern Lights College

Communities Served: Lower Post

Program Mission & Objectives:

In February, 1997 the Dena Le eh Learning Centre opened with the Lower Post Community Literacy Program in the Lower Post First Nation, a community with a population of about 165 Kaska people, straddling the British Columbia and Yukon border. The goals of the Dena Le eh Learning Centre are: "to encourage the sharing of ideas and understanding within the community through reading, writing and dialogue; to promote the sharing of books and ideas within the family, to encourage and support people, at all levels, in their studies, research and written communication; to develop community resources that foster these goals; and, to meet the defined needs of the community."

A partnership between the Lower Post First Nation and Northern Lights College, the Dena Le eh Learning Centre's literacy program provides instruction in basic and intermediate literacy, family literacy, adult basic education program support, computer training, and job search skills. Since the program started, numerous community initiatives have been made that encourage Elders, adults, youth and children to participate in the Centre's literacy programs. At present, approximately 35 Aboriginal learners utilize the program. Program intake is informal.

Other Centre literacy projects have included a Story Club; Homework Clubs; Income Tax Workshops; Email and Internet Training; and, a Family Lending Library. Current Centre programs include on-going one-on-one tutoring available for anyone needing special help (e.g. resume writing, getting ready to go back to school); a "Scribe Centre" to provide help to people in reading or writing any kind of document; crafts and activities time for adults and children; a weekly after school Science Club open to anyone interested in the exploration of science experiments and research; and weekly after-school tutorials for students.

The Lower Post First Nation, Chief and Council and an Education Committee provide direction and support to the Centre and its literacy program.

Program Features:

- The Centre has one full-time program coordinator/instructor. Two and half volunteers provide one-on-one tutoring at least one hour per week or as needed.

- The Centre's literacy program is offered on a weekly basis (i.e. children's tutorials - 6 hours per week and adult drop-in - 25 hours a week).

- 69% of current learners are under 15 years of age; 14% are 15 to 24 years of age; 8.5% are 25 to 39 years of age; and, 8.5% are 40 plus years of age. 65% are female. On average, youth participating in the program have a grade 5 level of education and adults have a grade 10 level.

- A recently completed initiative involved the training of adults to research their own history and culture and to develop and prepare a Kaska history book. The local Tribal Council organized a retreat for Elders and helped create a databank to capture the gathered information. The project highlights have since been published.

- A community sewing event is currently being organized to make "Kaska dolls." The names of doll body parts (e.g. arm, leg) will be printed on each doll in Kaska and English. An accompanying cloth book is also being developed which will contain similar pictures and labels. As well, an accompanying audio tape will be made by an Elder enunciating the names of the body parts in both Kaska and English.

- The Community Literacy Program is cost-shared between the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training and Stikina School District, in conjunction with the Department of Indian and Northern Development and the Lower Post First Nation. Annual Book Fairs are organized by children to sell books. Approximately $900.00 was raised at each of the last two events, a remarkable achievement for a community of this size.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Learners reportedly enrol in Centre programs for economic and cultural enrichment reasons. Aspects of the programs most liked by learners include: confidentiality, cultural and personal relevance; safe environment; and, quality of tutors. Future projects will include Internet training, book making and an "Elders as Teachers, Elders as Students" project.

"Our biggest challenge is helping adults see the importance of literacy and that they can improve their own literacy skills." The motivation of learners is also a challenge.

Honourable Mention

Kwanlin Dun House of Learning

Although we have been unable to complete a full program profile, we would like to give an honourable mention to the Kwanlin Dun House of Learning, located in Whitehorse, Yukon. It is one of only two Aboriginal-managed institutions running literacy and upgrading with adult Aboriginal learners identified by this initiative. The House of Learning is managed by Kwanlin Dun First Nation as part of its community-wide training plan, and offers a full-time program of Developmental Studies to adult members of the nation. Developmental Studies courses provide English, math and optional credits and take adult learners from the primary level right through to the GED. Drop-in tutoring for upgrading learners is also available in the evenings. The House of Learning attempts to adapt the Developmental Studies curriculum, developed by Yukon College, to better meet the needs, interests and perspective of Aboriginal adult learners.

For more information on the Kwanlin Dun House of Learning, contact the Coordinator, Ms. Tina Jules, at **Tel:** (867) 633-7835 or **Fax:** (867) 633-7841.

♦♦♦

"All students, regardless of age are fully integrated into our educational programmes so that it becomes just as natural for an adult to continue their education as it is for a child to start his."

♦♦♦

Hay River Dene Adult Basic Education Program
Sunrise Learning Centre
Box 3060
Hay River Dene Reserve, Northwest Territories
X0E 1G4
Tel: (867) 874-3107
Fax: (867) 874-3229

Resource Contact: Ms. Shirley Bonnetrouge, Adult Educator

Host Organization: Hay River Dene First Nation

Community Served: Adult learners of the Hay River Dene First Nation

Program Mission & Objectives:

In the words of the program instructor, the goal of the program is "to prepare learners to attain higher levels of education and employment". At the request of the Band Council, in addition to math and English, reading and writing at all levels, the 1998 academic year will feature a program in Office Procedures. The course is managed by the Hay River Dene Band and staff, who have hired an Aboriginal instructor and found funding from the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). The program is supervised and accredited by Aurora College which also provides the curriculum. The Hay River Dene have been running some form of upgrading and skills development program since the 1970s, but the course content changes year to year, and is defined in conjunction with Aurora College, based on the skills that the Band would like to see developed. Learners receive a training allowance from the Band's adult training fund. The course combines group instruction with one-on-one tutoring and teaching, where needed. All learners in the program are initially placed using the Canadian Adult Achievement Tests (CAAT) in order to get a sense of their reading and writing abilities.

Program Features:

- The program is employment oriented and combines general English and math upgrading with a core Office Procedures curriculum including records management, keyboarding, word-processing, job-preparation and career development.

- There is one full-time instructor for 12 full-time learners.

- All students are of the Hay River Dene, most are between the ages of 25 and 35, with an average of three to six years of formal schooling. Learners with children receive a child-care subsidy to permit them to attend the course.

- The program is full-time, approximately 30 hours a week for 32 weeks.

- While the basic curriculum is provided by Aurora College, the instructor is attempting to introduce elements of Aboriginal values and tradition, including a craft workshop, an exercise in transcribing interviews and stories told by Elders, and children's rhymes and games in the ancestral language.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

According to the instructor, learners are motivated to enrol in the program by a variety of factors. Some are keenly interested in learning and upgrading their skills, while others are looking for a pastime for the winter months or waiting to find full-time work. Regardless of their motivation, she feels that they will enjoy and benefit from the course. The Office Procedures focus will give learners hands-on experience with computers, which is generally of great interest to learners and a really good learning tool for language. The course also involves several weeks of placement in an office environment, which will give learners direct job-related experience.

The main challenge to the instructor is to find and stretch the resources needed to make the course work. She currently has access to three computers, which is inadequate for a course of this kind, and she is struggling to find another six computers for her students to use. Another issue is the budget allocated for course materials. Since the textbooks for this type of program are extremely expensive, purchasing them from her budget would consume the total annual amount for materials. The instructor is hoping that the Band will assume the cost of books, which could be kept for future use by other learners.

Adult Basic Education Program
Mowhi Community Learning Centre
Box 99, Rae Edzo, Northwest Territories
X0E 0Y0
Tel: (867) 392-6082

Resource Contact: Ms. Mary Richardson, Community Adult Educator

Host Organization: Aurora College

Community Served: Adult learners of the communities of Rae and Edzo and surrounding areas

Program Mission & Objectives:

While currently under the administration of Aurora College, and hence not autonomously managed by an Aboriginal organization, the Mowhi Community Learning Centre has a long history of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal management and may soon be taken over by the Rae (Dene) Band. The Centre has existed since the 1970s, and offers instruction in basic literacy to Grade 10. The purpose of the program, in the words of the Adult Educator is "to provide basic literacy and upgrading to bring students to a level to enter Aurora College's academic and technical programs". Learners are assessed using Aurora College's placement tests, which for most students reveal a difficulty in reading and writing in English. In 1997/98, the program had 16 students (and a waiting list) at various academic and literacy levels who receive both individual and group instruction.

The instructor involves her students in many community activities; in parenting classes, in volunteer activities at the Treatment Centre and community fund-raising initiatives. She says, "I am also teaching them to be community leaders, to get involved for the benefit of everyone, without needing to be paid for it."

Program Features:

- The program provides literacy and upgrading in the core subjects of English and math. It also provides Dogrib language, traditional knowledge, and natural and social sciences.

- One full-time instructor teaches all the courses. In the past there were two full-time instructors, as well as funds to pay tutors, but all but the one instructor have been cut.

- Classes are held daily from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. for approximately 30 weeks.

- All students are Aboriginal, from 19 to 38 years old. Approximately 75% are women.

- The instructor draws on many sources for her curriculum, using some ABE material from Aurora College, an Aboriginal curriculum from BC and the Dogrib Divisional Board's curriculum for Dogrib language. She and other guests share with her students their knowledge of traditional crafts and herbal medicines.

- Last year, with funding from the GNWT's Aboriginal Literacy Program, she brought in Elders to tell stories of the history of the Rae Edzo community and had her students record and transcribe these stories. They have also received funding to take students out on the land to learn traditional ways.

- It is estimated that approximately half the budget for the course comes from the Territorial government and half from the federal government.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

The instructor herself, a Dogrib woman who teaches all the subjects, provides continuity and a lot of motivation. She tells her students, "I had a learning disability, and look where I've been for the past ten years (teaching). I started school when I was ten and didn't graduate from high school 'til I was 27. It was hard work, so put your actions where you want to go and you will get there." The success of the program has spread through word of mouth and through its graduates, who mostly go on to higher levels of education and to new careers.

Whereas the program used to serve members of distant Dogrib communities, Pathways funding now goes directly to communities, and individuals cannot always get the training they want or need. When asked if she had any suggestions for others working in the Aboriginal literacy movement, Ms. Richardson said, "Know your Elders and respect them, because you will need their help! Learn to speak their language, their culture and respect the culture of the people you are working for. You'll understand your students better and where they're coming from. Don't confront your students in front of each other. They will speak if they have something important to say. Praise them only to themselves and never in front of others."

The challenges faced by the program are related to funding – not of the program itself but of the unavailability of training allowances to learners from more distant communities who still want and need this type of program. When learners were subsidized, the program could be more demanding. Now, since learners have no funding, it is more difficult to maintain discipline and enforce regular attendance. Several women learners also dropped out because of the red tape involved in receiving a child-care subsidy. Some were turned down for the subsidy, on the basis that their partners had no work and were available to look after the children. Others felt lost and frustrated when faced with a heavy bureaucratic procedure to access the subsidy. "Students leave in impatience when they have to go through a lot of red tape. It would be nice if the social worker was in the community to help the women, rather than in Yellowknife." It has also been a challenge for the program to have enough functioning computers to meet the learners' demand for computer time. Three or four new computers would be required to adequately meet the needs of the Centre.

NWA Education and Training Institute
Native Women's Association of the NWT
Box 2321
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
X1A 2P7
Tel: (867) 873-5509
Fax: (867) 873-3152

Resource Contact: Ms. Bren Kolson, Executive Director

Host Organization: Native Women's Association of the NWT

Community Served: Aboriginal women from across the Northwest Territories

Program Mission & Objectives:

As part of the NWA's Education and Training Institute, an employment-oriented program was developed to provide Aboriginal women, from the urban area and from 34 communities in the NWT, with academic upgrading and job-related skills. In 1997/98, the program was offered by a full-time instructor with 15 to 20 women learners, but is currently in transition to a new instructor. Hence, little specific detail on course content and methodology could be acquired. The program, however, has been offered since 1976, under the direction of the NWA and its Board of Directors.

Program Features:

- The program offers English and math upgrading from Grade 3 to Grade 11 levels, as well as computer training, life skills, parenting skills, job preparation, and optional credits towards the GED. In 1997/98, the program also offered a St. John's Ambulance course and help for those wishing to get their driver's license.
- In 1997/98, the course was staffed by one full-time Adult Educator and several Aboriginal volunteers.
- The program ran 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, from September to June.
- While the program is open to non-Aboriginal women, only one learner last year was non-Aboriginal. Ages ranged from 18 to 56, and all participants were women.
- Funding for the program is a challenge, coming in piece-meal from a variety of sources such as Pathways and the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

In the words of the Executive Director, "Many of the women in the program are motivated by a desire to get off income support, and to start again. They want to empower themselves so that they can be better examples to their families and communities. They want to get their pride and self-esteem back." The program attempts to give employment-related skills in a safe and welcoming environment. It encourages participation in the life of the urban Aboriginal community, through feasts, parties and workshops, and involvement with the local Friendship Centre and Aboriginal associations. Through the program, the women can also benefit from the other services provided by the NWA, and have access to job-placements, counselling and drug and alcohol treatment programs where needed.

According to the Executive Director, the challenges facing the program are mainly related to finding secure sources of longer-term funding. As a territory-wide organization, the NWA provides services to women from local and distant communities. But with the decentralization of Pathways funding, it is difficult to get communities to pay their share of the cost of services provided to their women members through the NWA. While many women from across the Territories would like to attend the program, they have difficulty getting the funds needed to travel to and stay in Yellowknife. The NWA would also like, in the coming years, to establish its own day-care service, since regular child-care is a problem for many women who rely on family, friends and occasional sitters.

Investing in People
Soaring Eagle Friendship Centre
Suite 2 - 8 Gagnier Street
Hay River, Northwest Territories
X0E 1G2
Tel: (867) 874-6581
Fax: (867) 874-3362

Resource Contact: Ms. Bette Lyons, Adult Educator
Mr. Abe Daigneault, Program Coordinator

Host Organization: Soaring Eagle Friendship Centre

Community Served: The urban Aboriginal population of Hay River and the Hay River Dene Reserve

Program Mission & Objectives:

The purpose of the adult literacy and upgrading projects offered by the Soaring Eagle Friendship Centre is to bring learners up to a grade level from which they can pursue further academic upgrading or a technical program through Aurora College or other post-secondary institution. In addition, job-readiness training is provided to assist participants attempting to enter or re-enter the work force. Friendship Centre staff are responsible for administering the projects, with a mandate given by the Board of Directors. The program has existed for ten years, with variations in structure and content, depending on the nature of funding that has been received. Since 1997, funding for the program has been for ten participants, however, the program accommodates up to 15 learners.

The Executive Director and Program Coordinator are involved in the assessment process, and interview all applicants to determine their level of commitment and learning objectives. The program instructor uses the Canadian Adult Achievement Tests (CAAT) initially for assessment and at the end of the program to give the participants an opportunity to recognize their own achievements. The program involves learners in discussion of community issues and community events. Political events, such as the impending division of the NWT, which affect participants, are discussed and the implications of such events for participants are presented in understandable terms. Participants are encouraged to attend, and if required, are accompanied to school meetings, medical appointments and community events to ensure that they are able to understand and participate in the discussion of issues which affect them and their families.

Program Features:

- The program offers a range of activities, implemented by one full-time instructor. These include language arts, math, science and social studies, basic computer training/keyboarding and basic life-skills. Depending on the range of levels of participants, some units may be taught in a small-group setting and others with students working individually at their own pace. Program content is also highly responsive to learner demand and may include helping students get their driver's license, current events, etc.

- Classes are full-time, five days per week, six hours per day, over approximately 22 weeks.

- Learners range from 18 to 68 years of age, most being between 25 and 40, with an average of five years of formal schooling.

- The majority of participants are Aboriginal, although non-Aboriginals are not excluded.

- Approximately two-thirds of participants are women.

- The program draws on a wide range of materials and curricula to reflect Aboriginal and northern themes. The MOKAKIT curriculum, developed by the Mokakit Education Research Association, the Dene Kede curriculum taught in NWT schools, and the Lit Kit developed by Aurora College are utilized for the program.

- Program financing is from the Government of the NWT's Income Support Program.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

Program staff feel that some participants are motivated to join the program in the hope of finding or changing jobs, and others see improved literacy skills as a step toward resolving personal problems. The safe and non-judgmental environment is another motivating factor for participants. "They are more comfortable here, than in a bigger, more formal setting. We recognize that they can't leave their feelings and difficulties at home." Through the Friendship Centre, participants can access a web of services that facilitate entry into formal education institutions. The program always has a waiting list. Program staff have made learning approachable and fun and are willing to adapt the program to participant

needs and interests. Staff have actively helped learners to identify appropriate funding mechanisms to realize their goals. As a result, several participants have gone on to pursue higher education.

Like most small programs, funding has been the biggest challenge. With cuts to funding, the program operates on a third of the budget it had three years ago. The program attempts to offer the same books, materials and services, while barely able to cover the cost of classroom space and the wages. The Friendship Centre Board and members help by identifying resources (books, materials, chairs and desks) which could be donated to the program. The Friendship Centre staff continually struggles to secure basic funding.

Distance and transportation to the program are issues for some participants. Residents of the Hay River Dene Reserve have utilized the school bus but this is restricted to days and hours when the public school system is in session. The program does not offer a day-care service but participants can apply for a child-care subsidy to help cover the costs of child care.

Adult Education Program
Tree of Peace Friendship Centre
Box 2108
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
X1A 2P6
Tel: (867) 873-5085
Fax: (867) 873-5185

Resource Contact: Ms. Helene Usherwood, Adult Educator
Mr. Tom Eagle, Executive Director

Host Organization: Tree of Peace Friendship Centre

Community Served: Urban Aboriginal population of Yellowknife and surrounding area

Program Mission & Objectives:

The mission of the adult education program offered by the Tree of Peace Friendship Centre is to teach and improve literacy skills and provide upgrading, with a goal of "empowering Aboriginal people to take charge of their destiny", while preparing them for the GED. The program is built around a core Aboriginal Studies curriculum. Reading and writing are taught through the use of poetry, history and newspaper articles by Aboriginal authors, including materials about pre-contact Aboriginal life.

The program has existed for 25 years, based on a high degree of commitment to this work on the part of the Executive Director, staff and Board. The Friendship Centre has always funded this program out of its operating budget. It is filled to its capacity of 16 students, and normally has a waiting list. The program is offered through a combination of one-on-one tutoring and small-group classes and discussions. Students are assessed by the Educator, through talking and trying to read various materials. The program regularly involves students in community and political events, with frequent field trips and visits by guest speakers from the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community.

Program Features:

- As indicated above, the program deals with learners at all literacy levels. It is built around an Aboriginal Studies core curriculum which emphasizes literature, history and current events, using Aboriginal authors' materials. Issues relevant to First Nations people are explored, involving group discussions and role playing. Students learn to read and write more easily when the material has meaning and interest for them. In addition, modules on language mechanics, math, sciences and computer training are included.

- The entire program is taught by one dedicated Adult Educator, with the assistance of 15 community volunteers.

- The program is offered daily, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., for the academic year.

- All learners are Aboriginal, from 22 to 55 years old, and around half are women.

- The curriculum has been developed by the Educator herself, based exclusively on Aboriginal materials and strongly reflects Aboriginal values, tradition and history, with the exception of math and sciences, where other materials are used.

- The teaching method is essentially based on a recognition that students cannot leave their fears and problems at home, and that time must be given to healing and sharing before the way will be clear for learning.

- Elders and other respected members of the Aboriginal community are frequently invited to the class, along with other guest speakers. A strong emphasis is placed on teaching Aboriginal learners their history, increasing their knowledge of their rights and the historic discrimination which First Nations people have experienced. Reading and writing are seen as the tools to be used in gaining a broader social, political and personal awareness.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

The Tree of Peace program is successful because of its holistic approach. The Adult Educator is trained and formerly worked as a psychiatric nurse, who recognizes that "pain, grieving and unfinished personal business" must not be excluded from the learning environment. Learners can also easily access a web or other counselling and support services offered by the Friendship Centre. The program has always had a waiting list, because many students have successfully gotten their GEDs and gone on to other learning environments. It is also taken seriously because it is rigorous: three days of unexcused absence are grounds for dismissal. Learners are empowered and encouraged to see themselves as 'owners' of the program, by participating in student committees, and to critically evaluate the Educator, volunteers, curriculum and services they receive.

While the program uses a large number of volunteers from the urban community, few are Aboriginal. It is difficult to find Aboriginal volunteers who have the time to devote to tutoring. Distance to the program is an issue for those who have to drop off children at school or at a sitter's. Child care is also an issue for mothers who may have difficulty finding a regular or dependable sitter.

Adult Reading/Writing Course
Zhahti Koe Friendship Centre
General Delivery
Fort Providence, Northwest Territories
X0E 0L0
Tel: (867) 699-3801
Fax: (867) 699-4355

Resource Contact: Kerry Minoza, Adult Educator and Executive Director

Host Organization: Zhahti Koe Friendship Centre

Community Served: Aboriginal population of Fort Providence and surrounding area

Program Mission & Objectives:

The goal of the course is to provide basic reading and writing skills to adult learners in the non-competitive and safe environment of the Friendship Centre. The reading/writing program is in its fourth year and is managed by the Executive Director, who is also the course instructor, with a mandate given by the Board of Directors. In 1997, funding was received for ten people, but by cutting the daily training allowance in half, the program was able to accommodate 18 adult learners. Some learners can choose to go on to general academic upgrading, which is provided by the local mini-campus of Aurora College by a full-time adult educator.

Program Features:

- The course is a one-month intensive course, given every day for five to six hours a day. While instruction is given in a small-class format, learners are at very different levels. The instructor also gives basic teaching to each individual to enable them to progress.

- There is one full-time staff-person who gives the course. In the past, based on available funding, there was also a part-time assistant who was an Aboriginal graduate of the Teacher's Aid program.

- All learners are Aboriginal, between the ages of 19 and 48, with an average of three to four years of formal schooling. Approximately 60% are women.

- Curriculum is developed by the instructor himself, and will be built on the experience of working with the group, drawing on Aboriginal literature, history and materials.

- Approximately 40% of the budget for the course comes from the federal government, via the Territorial government. Another 60% is contributed by local sources.

Some Final Observations & Concerns:

The instructor feels that learners are motivated to enrol in the course out of a desire for greater self-sufficiency and autonomy. There is a sense of shame which may accompany low levels of literacy, and the course aims to strengthen learners' sense of pride and self-esteem. Unlike courses at the local college, the course is free and learners receive a subsidy for child care. It also provides a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. "The motivation and desire to learn comes from the people themselves. Here we do not judge or test them."

It is a challenge shared with other programs to find Aboriginal tutors or volunteers. To involve others requires a capacity to plan in advance and have funding approved with some lead time, which has not been the experience of the instructor to date.

Honorable Mention

In Yellowknife, we encountered an interesting initiative which, while it does not fully meet our criteria for specifically adult literacy and upgrading initiatives for those who have been out of school for two years or more, is a good example of an Aboriginal organization taking preventive measures on behalf of Aboriginal youth. The Métis Nation of the Northwest Territories, with funding from the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, introduced in February 1998 a tutoring service for 15 to 19 year-olds "to try to keep kids who may be having difficulty with certain subjects in school". While some older adults may benefit from the service, the objective of the program is to provide free private tutors in schools and after-school homework programs. So far the Métis Nation has approximately 90 young-adult learners working with tutors in seven of its 14 communities.

In larger communities, the Métis Nation has placed full-time tutoring support for high-risk youth. In smaller communities, private tutoring and after-school homework clubs are staffed on an hourly basis. Each community can assess and decide how best to make the program work for its teen-aged and young-adult population. In the words of the coordinator, Beatrice Daniels, "The focus is on academics, good study habits and getting in touch with their Aboriginal self. Métis students are very isolated – caught between Aboriginal and White society. We are trying to help Métis students, through resource materials on Métis heritage and history, to take pride in and be aware of the importance of being Métis."

For more information, contact Beatrice Daniels at Métis Nation of the Northwest Territories, Box 1375, Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P1. **Tel:** (867) 873-3505, **Fax:** (867) 873-3395.

Regional Overview
Yukon and Northwest Territories

As part of the Aboriginal Literacy Initiative, Yellowknife and the South Slave Region were visited as part of our efforts to identify and gather information on Aboriginally-managed activities in the area of adult literacy. In all, seven projects or activities were identified and visited in Yellowknife, Rae-Edzo, Fort Providence and Hay River. In the Eastern Arctic, information was gathered by telephone. Telephone interviews were also conducted in the Yukon, as only two Aboriginally-managed initiatives were identified, making it difficult to justify the costs of traveling to the area.

Both the Yukon and Northwest Territories are characterized by a high proportion of Aboriginal people in the population, and levels of literacy among the lowest in the country. Low levels of literacy in these territories are based, in part, on the relatively late arrival of a unified formal educational system. In some regions, those in the 20-35 age group were among the first to be enrolled in school, since older mission schools did not service a large percentage of the population. But the two regions appear to be very different in terms of the approach taken by their governments to promoting the direct service delivery and management of adult literacy initiatives by Aboriginal communities and organizations.

In the Yukon, Yukon College has been given the territorial mandate to deliver ABE and other employment oriented programming at the community level. While we spoke to representatives of many First Nations communities, we identified only current Aboriginally-managed initiatives: the Ta'an "Pathfinders" program and the Kwanalin Dun House of Learning, both located in Whitehorse. While other communities had attempted to set up their own initiatives, no mechanism exists at the territorial level for them to access funding to deliver services.

The Northwest Territories, and particularly the South Slave Region demonstrate an impressive number of small, enduring, Aboriginal-managed activities in the area of adult literacy and up-grading. They co-exist along side a Territory-wide college system (Aurora/Arctic College), which also has a mandate to provide Adult Basic Education leading to technical, academic and employment-oriented college diplomas.

As in other regions of the country, it has been relatively difficult to hold fast to a particular definition of 'Aboriginal management' in our sample of adult literacy and up-grading initiatives. In the NWT, the Friendship Centers in Yellowknife, Fort Providence, and Hay River, as well as the Native Women's Association of the NWT are clearly Aboriginally managed organizations who run their own adult literacy and/or up-grading programs. But Aurora and Nunavut Arctic Colleges also have a territorial mandate to deliver or super-

vise, such programs in many communities. The Colleges themselves have a high degree of Aboriginal representation on their Boards and are responsive to requests from the communities in which they work. The extent of the Colleges' involvement in local ABE activities varies considerably from place to place - from the establishment and operation of Adult Education Centers to a more minor role in program supervision and accreditation.

The dominant issue which emerges in both the Yukon and NWT, as elsewhere, is the struggle over resources and control of the small funds allocated to Adult Basic Education (ABE). In Whitehorse, the Ta'an have invested approximately $170,000 of Band moneys in computer equipment and software to offer the computer-directed "Pathfinders" program to their members. In Yellowknife, the programs continue to survive and grow, despite the stiff competition for students and funding dollars from other, larger institutions. Both base their success on the fact that are better placed to serve the needs and understand the particular obstacles to learning faced by an Aboriginal clientele.

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"Literacy opens the door

for everything."

♦♦♦

Chapter Four

THE PROGRAMS IN COMMON: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following two chapters of *The Language of Literacy: A National Resource Directory of Aboriginal Literacy Programs* attempt to situate two aspects of literacy programming which are fundamental to the future viability of Aboriginal literacy in Canada. This chapter will attempt to identify and discuss what Aboriginal literacy practitioners themselves have identified as the most common challenges to the success of their program endeavours. The chapter following in this Directory will present our view, reiterated by literacy practitioners themselves, of the key variables or indicators of a "successful" literacy program. The inclusion of this information should serve to situate the current condition of Aboriginal literacy programs in Canada.

The national survey of Aboriginal literacy programs conducted for this resource directory concludes emphatically that there is no ideal Aboriginal literacy program; nor is there a typical one. Rather, all programs encountered have adapted to the needs and requirements of both the learners and the communities they serve. Literacy program coordinators have done their utmost to meet the needs of the learners with whatever resources are available, and the quality of program offerings almost always relate to the availability and comprehensiveness of resources. (For the purposes of this document, resources are defined in the broadest possible context - and could include print materials and non-print, such as audio-visual and computer software.)

However, results of the national survey for the resource directory did identify a number of common obstacles or challenges facing Aboriginal literacy programs in Canada.

Generally, the national research conducted for this Resource Directory confirms that, in addition to a uniform, almost passionate, degree of commitment and ability demonstrated by program coordinators and practitioners, the more successful of the program initiatives hold a number of characteristics in common. In other words, programs that have survived the ravages of scarcity and continuously enjoy the support of Aboriginal policy-makers, leaders and learners in the community share common characteristics such as supportive community leadership, competent program staff with opportunities for professional development, community support resources ranging from educational and life-counseling, to day-care and transportation assistance, adequate human and financial resources, relevant, personalized programming, and curriculum with the availability of consistent human intervention.

Coordinators have done their utmost to meet the needs of the learners

Conversely, the national research conducted for the Resource Directory was also interested in determining the perspective of coordinators/practitioners on the current outstanding challenges and obstacles facing the Aboriginal literacy movement in general and their own individual programs in particular. Considering the gravity

of some of these challenges, we are tempted to be melodramatic and suggest that in many Aboriginal communities, it is amazing that the program survives.

Coordinators as a whole are not only completely committed to the concept of adult learning and Aboriginal literacy, but we suspect that in the absence of sufficient "fuel" to run the programs that their commitment alone sometimes ensures the survival of program offerings. Many were the instances that program resources were so scare that one had to conclude in amazement that the program still ran at all!

By identifying the current common advantages or benefits and challenges and program obstacles (this section) and combining this narrative with the section on "Critical Components" - the key ingredients that comprise a well-working program, it is hoped that the combination will indicate to all Resource Directory users some of the paths ahead that may be more difficult to navigate then others.

A number of themes have emerged during the course of our interviews and data collection that we believe will substantially enhance our current understanding of the status of Aboriginal literacy programming in Canada. As the concept of "successful programming" is implied in our analysis here, we would do well to attempt to come to grips with a working definition of the concept. The term "successful" is always value-laden and subjective in definition. The term, even in the field of Aboriginal literacy, means many different things to different people. Our use of the term "successful program" supposes a program that is responsive and geared to the experiences and aspirations of learners, is adequately resourced both in terms of money and people fulfilling various roles, and leads to a marked improvement in the quality of life of participants because of the social and educational gains enjoyed by program participants.

Challenge # 1 - Isolation and the Onerous Responsibilities of Literacy Practitioners

Aboriginal literacy practitioners are "diamonds in the rough" laboring long and hard, too often in isolation, and without the support of peers and like-minded advocates. Outside of their operating milieu, they are not generally well-known - in spite of the impact they have made on learners' lives, and thus the community. In many instances, finding these "diamonds" has taken a lot more digging than originally anticipated.

The researchers had to penetrate through many more layers of secondary stakeholders than was originally thought necessary or possible! In all jurisdictions, save two, the theme of isolation and the concurrent issues of information-sharing, networking, professional development and peer validation processes were noticeable, respectively, by their presence and absence!

Many literacy practitioners do not have paper qualifications in the mainstream, western sense; i.e., they don't have a teaching certificate, or a post-secondary diploma. Rather, what they have is a good working knowledge of the social, economic, political, educational and spiritual factors that affect the empowerment of individuals, and thus the development of the community. They have found that the first step to coordinating a successful Aboriginal literacy program is to spend a lot of time reading and researching,

which includes, but is not necessarily limited to:

- **The proposals for the program** - so as to determine goals and objectives, the level of funding and the budget (eligible expenses, and amounts in each line item), the workplan and timelines, and what kind of reporting is expected at which times (usually narrative, financial and statistical). Some coordinators have found it helpful to have a calendar with these due dates marked in a highly visible manner. The proposal(s) will answer some questions about program delivery such as, "Will the instruction be one-to-one or small group? Will the program run a certain number of weeks/ months, and is there an expected result (participants to be job-ready? or meet certain linguistic or mathematical outcomes?)

- **Program-related materials** - and to find them if they're not readily available, so this can entail contacting similar programs and/or educational facilities. The practitioner will need to know how to find this information. Further, it is important for the practitioner to be aware of adult learning principles, and any other factors that may affect learning. For example, what is the learner's first language? Is he/she fluent and/or literate in that language? Can that knowledge be used to assist learning in the program?

- **Issues that impact on learners' lives** - often the people who come to Aboriginal literacy programs have had an experience with education that may have adversely affected their sense of self, or their feelings about education. They sometimes believe that they have failed; practitioners work to get learners to understand that it is the system that failed them. Some contributing factors to a diminished self-identity include the generational effects of *The Indian Act*, along with its attendant residential school system, and repression of language and culture.

Practitioners almost always seem to have an innate sense of these issues; they need more support in understanding how these factors play themselves out in the learning situation, and what steps to take to resolve them. In doing so, coordinators will require the input of others to give them input and feedback, and to keep their spirits up when the going gets tough - as it inevitably does.

If the program will be using tutors, the next step is to recruit and train them. This is important, even more so than recruiting learners, in that learners will need someone to work with when they take that all-important first step of coming to a literacy program. Some tutors may need to be taught learning principles, and strategies for working with Aboriginal adults. Still others may need a cross-cultural component, so as to better understand Aboriginal learners (including some of the aforementioned issues). Most certainly, the tutors will need to have an understanding of how to develop lessons geared to the learner's goals, how to assess progress, and how to keep learners motivated. The tutor training could be enhanced by having guest speakers come in to share practical tips for working with Aboriginal learners. More than one program has had a panel of learners discuss their educational experiences, and how

the literacy program has helped to change that.

The next step is to recruit learners, and this varies for the type of programming. The program may have a set target group, e.g., Family Literacy for single moms, Aboriginal language literacy, workplace literacy, etc. The program may have a waiting list, or it may be up to the coordinator to do the recruitment. If that is the case, then s/he must decide how best to do that. Here, the practitioner will need the assistance of other people in the community to find out who would benefit from the program, and how to best interest them in the program. Often, how a learner is approached makes the difference between whether s/he decides to enroll in the program or not.

Intake and assessment is important. Are there intake forms? Do they have to be developed? Who is doing the assessment - both initial and ongoing? Are they sent to a local agency who administers and grades them, such as with the Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT) at the local community college? If so, who is the contact person? What is the process? Or will the coordinator have to research and develop an assessment? On what? Numeracy? Language? Reading? The work of the literacy program would be greatly enhanced by being able to connect with other educators for sample materials that have worked effectively with Aboriginal peoples.

Even more challenging is how to handle the situation if the practitioners thinks the learner may have a learning disability (dyslexia, Attention Deficit Disorder, or even Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Effects to name but a few). This type of testing is not widely available, and can be expensive. The literacy coordinator will need a lot of practical suggestions for how to identify such learners (and in literacy programs, it's almost a given), how to best work with them, and how to get them tested if at all possible.

What kind of curriculum will the program be using? Is it set by the sponsoring agency, e.g., a community college? Or is the program going to use a certain software program? Will the coordinator and/or tutors decide the curriculum, along with the learner? It would certainly help the coordinator, and ultimately the learner, to have somebody to brainstorm with about the efficacy of the different approaches.

> They are working with people who have learning disabilities

As the learners progress, various real-life scenarios may affect their participation in the program and/or their ability to learn. Many practitioners have indicated that they are working with people who have learning disabilities, or whose life-events become paramount, e.g., substance abuse, marital separation. In fact, in Ontario there was a period when different programs were dealing with learners who were suicidal. While funders may see these issues as not relevant to literacy and better to be dealt with elsewhere, practitioners feel that they are important blocks to learning. They understand that it is integral to the learners' progress to help them work through the issues by linking them to literacy. After all,

literacy is more than the basics of reading and writing. It encompasses listening and speaking. It also involves thinking - literal, inferential, critical, reflective and appreciative. It's about helping the learner to make more informed decisions about what affects him/her. Literacy practitioners know this in their hearts; they often need support in assisting learners with these issues.

All of these considerations can certainly be overwhelming, and coordinators have found it crucial to set up some type of support system for themselves as they lay the foundation for their program. If possible, this could be in the form of a Literacy Advisory Committee, comprised of programs in the area that may be referring learners to the program.

The survey strongly indicated that practitioners put their hearts and souls into their work, and see the learners as more than an "academic unit that needs to go up a grade level or two". In considering all the issues that can affect both the literacy program and the learners, the coordinator can easily care too much about the learners and want to do the best job possible, often giving over and above what is required by the "job description", including of his or her own time and resources. Putting that amount of time and effort into one's work does have its pay-off in the fact that learners feel, often for the first time, someone truly cares about them. The blocks to learning are more easily removed, and learners are able to take more control of the decisions that impact on their lives. As one coordinator put it:

"I *love this work, but I sometimes feel that I am the only one in the country that is doing it. I miss the voices and support of other practitioners across the country, and I wonder if any are feeling the way I do.*"

Challenge # 2 - Resources

As important as the first theme, is the uniform inadequacy of financial resources available to Aboriginal literacy programming in Canada. This has been a consistent refrain through all of the interviews. While there are certainly significant variations in levels of program support within and across jurisdictions, even those programs with larger endowments, or access to a variety of sources of funding often struggle to maintain a minimum level of consistent service. Two evident and important outcomes of this program malaise are the ability of staff to maintain a dependable level of comprehensive professional programming, and to effectively reach and provide learning opportunities to those who need it.

Let us consider the diversity of ways in which Aboriginal literacy programming in Canada is funded. Some provinces, such as Ontario, have core funding from the Ministry of Education and Training, and the programs work specifically **not** to replicate the system that failed Aboriginal Peoples in the first place. Rather, they have looked at the learner as an individual who has four aspects to self that must be recognized and nurtured - spiritual, emotional, mental and physical. In addition, they recognize and maximize Aboriginal learning styles. However, this can put them in conflict with the funding criteria which states who is and who is not eligible to attend the program, what activities will be funded, and what outcomes the learners are expected to meet. A number of successful after-school programs and homework nights for youth

have struggled to keep going because they are no longer eligible for funding; yet, the community has come to count on them, as these program components were having a positive impact on students' achievement and completion rates. That is, they were addressing the high drop-out rates in the institutional educational system. Now, the programs are either run by volunteers, or the coordinator puts in extra time and, sadly, cannot count the statistics or contact hours. Their only consolation is that they are helping a community member.

A number of Aboriginal literacy projects are funded through the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) dollars. A complication is that NLS monies cannot be used for ongoing operational costs. It is for projects only.

This creates a dilemma for those practitioners who wish to use the holistic approach, and address the issues in the learners' lives that create blocks to learning. In general, there will be a maximum of two years of funding.

Some provinces use their Adult Basic Education (ABE) dollars to include a literacy portion. However, the literacy projects must adhere to the criteria of the funding source, and of the community college receiving the funding. This can be doubly restrictive, in that they are often required to use the curriculum of the college.

Still other programs are fortunate enough to have funding from their own First Nation community. In this way, the community has full control over its literacy programming. However, such an approach requires that the people overseeing the funding have a good understanding of the causes, effects and ways to address literacy. Without that understanding, they may be wont to replicate the system that focuses on only the economic benefits of literacy, or how many units the learner has completed.

A few programs have been able to access dollars from the Local Delivery Mechanisms (former Aboriginal Management Boards), or from economic development funding sources. Here again, the criteria can sometimes be restrictive or even a barrier to participation for some learners - e.g. - they must be receiving employment insurance.

Whatever the source of funding, criteria come with it which can enhance or restrict programming. As one coordinator explained,

"I'm mainly a paper-pusher now. We have about four sources of funding, all with their own rules of what they fund, or don't fund, and their different ways of reporting. I spend a lot of time going after the funding to keep it going, and figuring out what I can report where and when- and that's time away from the learners."

In addition, competition for the funding is fierce. Practitioners often "make-do" with whatever they get, often operating, "from hand to mouth and on a shoe-string." In the survey, few were the jurisdictions that offered sufficient financing for a comprehensive program of support. Coordinators are so busy with the delivery and administrative aspects of programming, that there is precious little time available to lobby appropriate authorities to "raise the profile" of Aboriginal literacy - a necessary first step in securing the attention of politicians. Often, time taken to participate in an initiative, albeit an important one, is seen as time away from the learners - something practitioners

are reluctant to do, especially if they have certain objectives to achieve within a certain time frame.

There are many challenges facing the movement, but it is unlikely that any are as serious, or as potentially debilitating as the consistent lack of financial resources provided to Aboriginal literacy in most jurisdictions across the country. One coordinator encapsulated the situation well, saying,

"Native adult learners are a forgotten people, a forgotten population. I know the pressures are tight. With so little money, governments and First Nations communities are going to spend the education dollar on the young ones coming up - the wage earners of the future. They are not going to spend their money on the wageless of the past."

Native adult learners are a forgotten population...

The focus of a lot of governments and leadership, including Aboriginal, is on economic development. Aboriginal literacy practitioners require considerable assistance in educating the decision-makers that economic development starts with, and is an integral part of, personal development and community empowerment. For Aboriginal Peoples, a holistic approach to community considers development of all of the functions of a community - economic, political, social, educational and cultural. As Antone and Miller suggest:

"In order to meet the human needs within a community, programs and services must be structured within these areas. These areas do not operation in isolation of each other, rather, they are interdependent."

The Power Within People, Antone, R.; Miller, D.; and Myers, B; Peace Tree Technologies, Deseronto, Ontario, 1986

An analogy would be to consider a pie with five pieces. To bake a pie by putting all the ingredients into one part would put that pie out of balance. For those unfamiliar with the Aboriginal literacy movement or introduced to programming for the first time, it is difficult to believe how successful they have become with so few external resources available to assist their efforts. As an eastern coordinator put it, having just completed another "downsizing" exercise with their limited budget,

"Literacy just doesn't rate with those in government who make the decisions. The program does not have access to the kind of resources available to other training programs such as job-readiness. They have concluded that our generation of learners is unemployable. It is as if this is an expendable generation!"

Challenge # 3 - Safe & Welcoming Environment

As much a critical indicator of the success of any Aboriginal literacy program as a recurring theme or common thread in numerous program interviews across the country, it it is doubtful that there is a more important consideration in sustaining an Aboriginal literacy program than the provision of a safe and welcoming environment where learning can take root and grow. As one program coordinator pointedly and eloquently stated:

I am a product of a school system that refused me my language and almost convinced me that my beliefs were evil and pagan . . . . that the way my parents and grandparents taught me to look at the world was wrong. They treated my values like a doctor would treat a cancer tumor. In trying to rip those things out of me, they didn't know it, but they were killing all of what I was. I survived this. But when I look around there are so many casualties that did not. Bringing my brothers and sisters together in a place that does not threaten to challenge or kill who they are is the only place where we can start again. Here we can unlearn the bad and renew ourselves together.

It also became clear through the interviews that a safe and welcoming environment in which to learn did not only refer to a physical place, such as a classroom or school. Environment also is as much about approach, attitude and respect as it is about physical place. It is about recognizing, valuing and building upon the cultural, emotional, social and attitudinal "place" of the learner. In short, an environment that is not only non-threatening, but beyond that, accepts the participant for where she is at and provides a supportive vehicle for where she wants to go.

The Ontario Native Literacy Coalition (ONLC) compiled some statistics in order to demonstrate to funders the socio-economic realities of Aboriginal communities, and thus Aboriginal learners. The ONLC's basic premise is that the statistics are indicative of symptoms of a larger issue - erosion of a positive cultural identity for Aboriginal Peoples. That is, these statistics are not meant to perpetuate stereotyping; rather, they are meant to underscore the validity of the holistic approach, of which a safe and welcoming environment is an integral component. Those statistics were taken from the following:

- 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS) - Schooling, Work and Related Activities, Income, Expenses and Mobility
- 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey - Language, Tradition, Health, Lifestyle and Social Issues;
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) 1996 Basic Departmental Data; and,
- 1996 Census: Aboriginal Data (from the Internet)

Statistics for those who identify with an Aboriginal group, and salient to this part of the resource directory include:

- the significant number who attended residential school, and who may be experiencing "residential school syndrome" (11% for those aged 15 to 49, and 29.6% for those aged 50 - 64) - this number does not account for those affected by the generational effects of the syndrome;
- 21.5% reported that they had difficulty finding employment because there were few or no jobs available, BUT this was almost 2/3 of those who looked for work;
- 13.5% stated that their education or work experience did not match the available jobs BUT this was 41% of those who looked for work;
- just over 5.3% reported that they had trouble finding a job because they were an Aboriginal person BUT this was 16% of those who looked for jobs;
- 54% earned less than $10,000, and 1 in 5 received social assistance (In 1991, Statistics Canada, Low Income Cut-offs - the most widely used measure of poverty

in Canada - set the poverty level at $16,511 for individuals and $31,071 for a family of four. According to National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO) Facts: Myths about Poverty.

"...all welfare rates are well below the poverty line, and the highest rates are still 20% below; the lowest are 76% below..."

- 8.3% said the availability of food was a problem;
- 24.7% said their support network was an Aboriginal worker/agency;
- 24.7% had experienced a suicide
- 67.1% had experienced unemployment;
- 39.2% had experienced family violence;
- 24.5% had experienced sexual abuse
- 47.9% had experienced drug abuse;
- 61.1% had experienced alcohol abuse;
- 14.9% had experienced rape;
- 30.1% reported having a disability;

In short, Aboriginal Peoples, including and especially learners, are often dealing with issues other than the need to improve their literacy levels - issues such as poverty, unemployment, abuse, loss of a loved one, or even a disability. In fact, many of these factors can be significant blocks to learning. Compounding that, Aboriginal Peoples often speak of "the revolving door syndrome", in which they are referred from one agency to another. The effect of this can be that individuals treated thus, feel their needs are not important enough, i.e., **they** are not important enough. Practitioners have found that they must create a safe and welcoming environment, so that learners can work on these issues, either before learning can take place, or concurrent with the literacy sessions. In the Aboriginal sense, safe and welcoming would mean spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically.

An analogy that an Aboriginal literacy practitioner uses when she does workshops is that of "the fire within". This instructor conducts all of her workshops in a Circle because she firmly believes that Aboriginal Peoples receive their teachings from the universe, and that there is ample evidence in the universe that the Circle is integral to life - the sun, the moon, the earth, the cycles of the days, months and seasons, etc. She states that what we experience in daily life is a microcosm of the larger picture. For example, the sun (fire) is the centre of the universe. Similarly, human beings have a fire at their centre, i.e., their spirit. In some cases, that fire has gone dim, particularly if that person has experienced some of the above-noted issues. The "revolving door" further dims the light. It is incumbent upon Aboriginal literacy practitioners to help learners recognize that fire, to fan it, and to have it burn brightly again. The first step is to create a safe and welcoming environment.

The challenge is how to create that safe, welcoming environment, while doing literacy and not "triggering" people. For example, how does one conduct an intake and assessment when the learner has had negative educational experiences, and a fear of tests? How does one be a warm, friendly instructor without violating the boundaries of someone who was been abused, and may misperceive friendliness, especially from someone of the opposite sex? How does one create a safe and welcoming environment if there is little or no monies for office/classroom space and/or furniture?

In some cases, the literacy office is a cubby-hole, with no privacy. Or classes are run in borrowed room, materials have to be put away at the end of each session, meaning that the learners do not have a space to call their own. Sometimes, the furniture is old and broken, but that's all they've been able to acquire. How does one refer a learner elsewhere if the mandate and services of the literacy program is not suited to the person's needs without contributing to the learners' sense that no one cares (enough)? Or maybe the question is when does that referral happen? How does a practitioner make a person feel welcome to take a leave-of-absence from the program to take care of an urgent personal or family matter, and to return when it is resolved, and yet not be in conflict with the requirements of some funders who focus on attendance and contact hours? How does a literacy practitioner balance recognition that a learner has a lot going on his/her life that affects his/her concentration in session with another's learned techniques of playing emotional hookey? When does one allow them space, encourage them, or even push them? How does a practitioner take all this into consideration without taking on too much, and neglecting his/her own needs?

In discussions with practitioners, some have said that learners have told them that being in the program is keeping them off the streets, or out of jail. Still others report that learners feel that somebody is respecting them as individuals - for the first time - and they are able to progress. This makes them stay in the program and achieve outcomes such as more control over their own lives, more involvement in the family and community, getting a better job, and, in one case, becoming the literacy coordinator.

In an Aboriginal sense, the practitioners are facilitating a learner's sense of self, giving him/her that firmer foundation on which to build learning and/or skills. In the eloquent words of one practitioner:

> The practitioners are facilitating a learner's sense of self

"When you look at the drop-out rate among Aboriginal students in traditional, formal educational institutions, I am sure that many agree with us when we say that our program is better value for the money. In addition to a learning experience, students can relate to what we offer. They can't say that about the institutions where you are more a number than a person."

As suggested, we could not ignore the constant reference to the importance of a welcoming and nurturing environment, particularly for older adult learners whose experience with the education systems of their youth left them scarred and suspicious. That the learning environment be supportive, non-critical and safe was considered essential to the long-standing or on-going success of the program. The challenge, of course, is to maintain that atmosphere and to rid the learning environment of as many social impediments as possible.

Challenge # 4 - Native Curriculum

Many program coordinators suggested that using a curriculum that was either in whole

or in part comprised of Aboriginal subject matter was not essential, but most felt it was highly desirable. Additionally, Aboriginal literacy coordinators emphasized a point often ignored in literacy programming: materials geared towards adults work best. However, the reality is that, often materials written at a level which can be read and understood by beginning readers are prepared with children in mind. Some learners do not seem to mind reading children's books, as they may have children - either their own, or in the extended family. For some learners, being able to read children's stories means they are experiencing success, or their main reason for joining a literacy program was to be able to read to their children. For others, it reinforces the misperception that they should have learned to read or write when they were younger and in school. The exception is Aboriginal legends, because they are multi-level.

The challenge, then, is to ensure that the curriculum is geared towards adults, i.e., it follows the principles of androgogy. As Diane Hill has stated in her work comparing pedagogy with androgogy, the latter: "Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education: Prior Learning Assessment and Its Use with Aboriginal Programs of Learning, Hill, Diane, First Nations Technical Institute, Mohawks of Tyendinaga First Nation Territory, 1994, taken from: The Modern Practice of Adult Education, Dr. Malcolm Knowles, Chapter 4, pp. 43-44, 1970:

It is normal aspect of the process of maturation for a person to move from dependency toward increasing self-directedness, but at different rates for different people, and in different dimensions of life. Teachers have a responsibility to encourage and nurture this movement. Adults have a deep psychological need to be generally self-directing, although they may be dependent in particular temporary situations.

As people grow and develop, they accumulate an increasing reservoir or experience that becomes an increasingly rich resource for learning - for themselves and for others. Furthermore, people attach more meaning to learnings they gain from experience than those they acquire passively. Accordingly, the primary techniques in education are experiential techniques - laboratory experiments, discussion, problem-solving cases, simulation exercises, field experience and the like.

That is, a lot of planning has to go into the curriculum to ensure that it is relevant to the learners' lives, and that it is androgogical. One coordinator has a further caveat to add to the selection of learning materials.

"Learning has to relate to experience, and experience relates to and reflects culture. You cannot learn unless you rely on the experiences and culture of the participant. That is why learning about and retaining our culture is such an important part of our programming.

What then of Aboriginal materials? Are they readily available? Are they applicable? Most certainly, there are a number of distributors and clearing-houses for Aboriginal resource materials, and one specifically for Aboriginal literacy materials (Ningwakwe Clearing House in Ontario). The dilemma is whether the literacy programs have knowledge of these places. Having that, do they have the budget to purchase materials? How do they know if the materials are on topics that encompass their learner's strengths, interests and needs? Written at the appropriate level? Particularly, computer

software is quite expensive, and practitioners are reluctant to invest very limited resources without first knowing its effectiveness with Aboriginal adults.

In assessing the usefulness of certain curricula, some practitioners have found the following list of considerations from The CASNP (Canadian Alliance in Solidarity for Native Peoples) useful. In addition to identifying the appropriate age level for the text material and the degree of Aboriginal involvement in the writing and publication of the curriculum material, the guide prompts an evaluation of the cultural suitability of the proposed material:

- Does this book give insight into the values, the worldview, the living vision of Aboriginal Peoples?
- Does this book lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal peoples, yesterday and today?
- Does this book give insight into the diversity of Aboriginal cultures and Aboriginal peoples?
- Are both sides of the events, issues and differences presented?
- Is information in this book accurate, misleading, or does it contain actual errors?
- Is the image of the Aboriginal person(s) portrayed with human strengths and weaknesses, responding to his/her own nature and his/her own time?
- Does this book acknowledge the contributions Aboriginal peoples have made to western civilization?
- Is this book sensitive to appropriate and accurate use of words and terminology (i.e. avoiding: chief, squaw, buck, Red skin, etc.)
- Would this book help a non-Aboriginal reader accept that "Indians are people like me?"
- Would a Aboriginal reader be proud of this book and his/her heritage?
- Does this book effectively counteract the negative stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples?
- Has this book been reviewed by a person knowledgeable about Aboriginal peoples as well as the subject of the book?
- Were Aboriginal people involved in the writing, illustration or publishing of this book?
- What additional material is needed to give this book more relevance or to round it out?
- How can this book best be used in a school curriculum to enhance a variety of themes, not only "Aboriginal studies"?

Throughout the national interviews, two challenges emerged: Finding and incorporating appropriate Aboriginal learning materials into the program curriculum and, more significantly, doing so when the predominant curriculum used is "format or formula" material prepared by local non-Aboriginal Boards of Education, computer software companies, etc. Many coordinators said that they were aware of curriculum production projects in different parts of the country, but the challenge was to find the time to adapt the material to local needs and realities.

"Educators often talk about the need to incorporate Native curriculum into our work and we agree with them - but they tend to lump us all together as one culture. Using Sechelt curriculum material in our Ojibway community would be like introducing a Swahili language and cul-

ture course into a while elementary school in Scarborough - for the kids it would be a strange experience to say the least!"

One creative solution was offered by some coordinators. They suggested that a "generic" curriculum be developed using commonalities, such as values, which would then allow individual First Nations and communities to fill in applicable local traditions and beliefs, legends and history.

Consultants were impressed with the substantial variation of program approaches and methodologies. From Laubach to computer-based learning, there is a rich and wide vein of experience and useful program information that works effectively in these communities and opportunities should be found to more fully and rigorously explore their utility and appropriateness. Should opportunities also develop that would permit Aboriginal literacy program coordinators and practitioners to come together and share this information and inform a broader literacy public about the variety of program approaches within the Aboriginal community, it would certainly enrich the movement.

Challenge # 5 - Transportation and Daycare

Two practical obstacles that hinder ongoing learner participation in an Aboriginal literacy program include and relate to adequate systems of social support for adult learners. The actual physical distance learners had to travel to a program, and the difficulty they experienced in organizing and/or paying for transportation to the program was frequently mentioned as a challenge and an obstacle.

On First Nations communities, the literacy program may be on a part of the reserve that is much beyond walking distance from the learner's residence. Many learners are not in a position to own a vehicle. Some may be fortunate enough to have friends or family with whom they live, or who are close by that have a car. Even then, it is still a matter of arranging the transportation, often having to wait until transportation is available, which may or may not coincide with the timing of the literacy sessions. Still others live alone, or do not have extended family.

Obstacles that hinder ongoing learner participation

A common situation is exemplified by the aborginal literacy program offered under the auspices of a Friendship Centre in the near-north. The nearby First Nation situated on an island is a boat ride away, in addition to two possible car rides - one on the mainland and one on the island itself. "Water taxis" are available at the cost of $5 each way. During freeze-up and break-up, helicopters provide service at $20 one-way. A participation challenge if there ever was one!

Of similar importance, particularly to younger women with children was the constant requirement for organizing some form of day or evening care for their children, while they participated in a literacy program. Some programs mitigated the day-care problem by providing participants with subsidies to assist them in this regard; but, in most cases, the financial assis-

tance is but minimal. Access to affordable day care remains a significant barrier to consistent participation in an on-going program.

"I have a single mom in the program with three kids. She travels the ten miles to the program, every day - rain or shine - and with the little that we pay her, she pays her aunt to look after the kids, and when that doesn't work, she sometimes brings them here, or misses the class, which really upsets her. She'll finish, because of the kind of person she is - but why does any learner have to go through that just so that she can learn to read?!"

Challenge # 6 - Motivation

Many coordinators cited the day to day challenges facing all learners in the program. The pressures of work and family-related responsibilities, and the inevitable conflicts which influence the students' feelings about themselves and their desire to continue working in the learning program. As such, these and other challenges left many coordinators feeling that they had a personal responsibility for motivating students, and keeping their motivation high so that their interest in the program would remain at a level that would encourage them to stay and/or to return to meet their objectives when personal matters were resolved.

It could very well be a sick child or an ill babysitter that causes the learner to stay at home. This is legitimate, and must be factored into the expectations of and from a learner. Or the family is going through an adjustment, now that the person they always counted on to be at home and looking after their needs is no longer there, but is out pursuing something for him/herself. Family members can, intentionally or unintentionally, resort to "sabotaging behaviours", which will have an effect on the learner, causing him/her to feel guilty, or "selfish". Keeping the learner focussed on his/her goal, while helping him/her to understand and resolve the problem, can be difficult in these circumstances.

Again, the aforementioned statistics cite the large number of those who identify as an Aboriginal person and who has experienced trauma:

- suicide 24.7% (1 in 4);
- family violence 39.2% (2 in 5);
- sexual abuse 24.5% (1 in 4);
- drug abuse 47.9% (1 in 2); and,
- alcohol abuse (3 in 5).

One can only assume that these same statistics, or even higher, apply to learners. These issues can impede learning in people, which, in turn, makes it more likely for them to be candidates for literacy programs. The literature on trauma suggests that people develop a coping mechanism often referred to as disassociation. That is, it is difficult for them to be emotionally "present" for the learning. It requires a truly empathic instructor to recognize that the learner's seeming lack of motivation is in fact a recurring symptom of the trauma, and not just a disinterest in the work. The challenge becomes, then, having recognized what is going on, what does one do about it?

Some symptoms could include feeling that they can't succeed anyway, so why bother trying. Old fears may be triggered by activities in the classroom, and it is easier to move

to anger or indifference than to look at and deal with the fear. How does the practitioner put the anger into context, not take it personally, and, more important, help the learner to recognize what he/she is doing, and then to learn what to do about it?

Aboriginal literacy practitioners certainly have a lot to consider in keeping learners' motivation at a level that allows them to focus on their learning.

Challenge # 7 - Learning Resources

Related to both the inadequacy of financial resources, and the status of Aboriginal learning curricula in the country, coordinators in some jurisdictions felt that they would like to gain access to a greater number of learning aids, such as computers and computer-assisted learning technologies. The difficulty is not just a question of finances, though that is most often the deciding factor in whether the program can acquire these learning resources. Even more of a dilemma is how to evaluate the effectiveness of these materials before putting out the large initial cost for them. Some of the research suggests that there are indeed rapid gains in reading levels with some computer software, but that this is often a "honeymoon" period, and that the gains will reach a plateau.

Several years ago, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) parachuted the Pathfinders program into select First Nations communities across Canada. In one such community, the software and support materials now sit on a shelf, as the coordinator wanted to use a more individualized and culturally-relevant approach.

In the interim, more research will have to be done on what is available at reasonable cost, and how effective it is for Aboriginal Peoples, especially participants in literacy programs.

There is little doubt that the roadblocks and impediments to Aboriginal literacy programs in Canada are substantial. In addition to some of the themes suggested above, literacy coordinators and practitioners struggle with little external assistance whether defined as adequate access to information technology hardware, trained tutors and volunteers, recognition of achievement by post-secondary institutions or adequate opportunities for professional development and information sharing.

The list of challenges to Aboriginal literacy programs across the country is daunting indeed. The major themes identified above are but some of the obstacles strewn deliberately or benignly in the path of Aboriginal educators and literacy practitioners who struggle daily in conditions not significantly different from those which any Canadian can encounter in impoverished developing countries. With no surprise, the challenges tend to mirror the obstacles to growth and development encountered by the vast majority of Aboriginal communities across Canada. A paucity of financial resources for operational support, training and capacity-building. Limited access to technical support systems and information technology that would significantly enhance their ability to deliver holistic programming. Yet, year after year, in kitchens or classrooms, "after-hours or on Sundays," the magical combination

of an individual's desire to improve her prospects in life and that of her family, coupled with the passionate dedication of literacy coordinators to the concept of personal and community empowerment makes it all happen in hundreds of Aboriginal communities across this country. The poignant words of a literacy volunteer captures the essence of the current situation:

"If I were a Christian, I would have to say that we have taken a few loaves and fishes and, somehow, managed to allow the multitudes to nourish themselves. But I am not a Christian. And we have no loaves and fewer fish."

Chapter Five

The Programs in Common: Critical Components

As mentioned in Chapter Four, The Programs in Common: Challenges and Opportunities, our national survey of Aboriginal literacy programs suggests that, given the diversity in Aboriginal communities, there is no ideal program, nor is there a typical one. What has become evident, however, is that there are a number of critical variables or components whose presence in an Aboriginal literacy program will contribute to the quality and longevity of the program. In short, there are a number of factors which contribute to the success of a literacy initiative. This is not to say that all programs must contain all of the components that we identify below. Nor are we suggesting that programs lacking most or all these ingredients are doomed to failure. Additional research would be required over a longer term to verify such a claim. Nevertheless, trends have certainly emerged in our national explorations with Aboriginal literacy coordinators, indicating that the presence or absence of "critical program components" seriously affect the quality of the program initiative.

There is no ideal program, nor is there a typical one

We hasten to add that such terms as "quality" or "successful" are highly subjective and value-laden, but our research does provide preliminary indications that Aboriginal literacy programs which have "survived and thrived" have been those that have incorporated varying degrees of the following characteristics into their ongoing operations:

- A generally reliable and predictable source of ongoing funding
- A safe and welcoming learning environment
- Sympathetic and supportive community leadership
- Trained program staff and access to volunteers
- A program orientation which focuses on the learner as a whole person, with social, cultural, spiritual and physical abilities, needs and limitations where the curriculum is oriented to the needs of the learner and which progresses solely on the basis of the student's abilities
- A curriculum which is as "culturally appropriate" as is feasible for the learning objectives of the learner, relating to the community and cultural referents of the learner and incorporating materials which reinforces cultural values and identity
- Access to learning aids other than curriculum
- Initiatives which lessen or minimize physical and financial impediments to participation in a literacy program, such as the provision of day-care assis-

tance, transportation to the program site, counselling

- A formal and/or informal intake assessment or evaluation which also seeks to identify impediments in the learner's life-experience which may hinder the acquisition of literacy skills

- Benchmark opportunities for learners to measure their progress, and formal rewards or recognition to learners as they proceed along the learning path

- Initiatives that continue to provide motivation for learners, such as program community activities, outings, buddy-systems and access to literacy practitioners, community and family-support activities

- Group rather than individual or work-alone learning experiences

Benchmark opportunities for learners to measure their progress

Before reviewing a number of these characteristics in greater detail, it would be appropriate to review some of the excellent work done to date across Canada which has attempted to capture what Aboriginal educators consider to be the elements of an effective Aboriginal literacy program.

Let us first consider a review of the literature that resulted from International Literacy Year, 1990, and that were national Aboriginal initiatives. They included:

- **The Native Literacy Research Report**, Rodriguez, C. & Sawyer, D., Native Adult Education Resource Centre, Salmon Arm, BC (1990). The authors of this report developed a questionnaire which was administered to Aboriginal literacy practitioners, and that was aimed at identifying barriers to education for Aboriginal Peoples. As well, they researched Aboriginal literacy programs, primarily in British Columbia and Ontario. The findings from both sources formed the basis for recommendations about what was considered to be an effective literacy program.

- **You Took My Talk: Aboriginal Literacy and Empowerment**, Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, House of Commons, Ottawa, Canada (1990). The committee is permanent, and reports to Parliament. It solicited written and verbal submissions from Aboriginal Peoples across Canada who had an interest in Aboriginal literacy. An analysis of these submissions resulted in recommendations to Parliament on Aboriginal literacy.

- **Aboriginal Literacy Action Plan, A Literacy Practitioner's Guide to Action**, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (1990) Six working-groups of people involved in the delivery of education services to Aboriginal Peoples across Canada met to discuss Aboriginal literacy, and to formulate a national strategy.

- **Towards Linguistic Justice**, Assembly of First Nations, Ottawa, Canada (1990) All

First Nations communities across Canada were asked to complete a questionnaire that was designed to identify the number of speakers and the extent of use of each Aboriginal language. The main finding of this survey was that, of the 152 participating Bands:

- ✓ 15% have flourishing languages
- ✓ 20% enduring
- ✓ 25% declining
- ✓ 30% endangered
- ✓ 11% critical

The report made recommendations on strategies that were considered to be necessary to address each of the aforementioned states of the languages.

- **National Literacy Survey**, National Association of Friendship Centres, Ottawa, Canada (1990) The author examined issues in literacy and Aboriginal language programs in Friendship Centres across Canada, then made recommendations based on findings.

- **Literacy for Metis and Non-Status Indian Peoples: A National Strategy**, Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research Inc. and the Metis National Council. The research was aimed at detailing successful approaches to Aboriginal literacy (with a focus on Metis and Non-Status Indian Peoples).

These reports underscored the need for Aboriginal literacy programs to:

- Ensure that programs are community-based and learner-centred
- Use the holistic approach (through assisting learners to achieve balance among their spiritual, emotional, mental and physical aspects)
- Place literacy into culture, rather than fitting culture into literacy
- Use the dual forces of language and culture to help Aboriginal communities sustain and maintain a positive cultural identity (through offering literacy in the Aboriginal language of origin and/or the official language in use in the area)
- Develop and use materials and methodology that are relevant to the learners' lives (i.e., they reflect the experiences, needs and aspirations of the Aboriginal learner, and maximize Aboriginal learning styles)
- Empower the individual in his/her relationship to self, family, community and nation
- Contribute to community development (economic, social, educational, political and spiritual)

Of these seven factors, perhaps the one most open to interpretation – and the one most in need of explanation, mainly to funding parties, but, sometimes to practitioners – is the holistic approach. *Aboriginal Access to Post-Secondary Education: **Prior Learning Assessment and its use within Aboriginal Programs of Learning*** (First Nations Technical Institute/Loyalist College; Deseronto, Ontario; Diane Hill; 1995) offers these words: "The ability of Aboriginal people to attend to the needs of their people

in a holistic manner is both valuable, worthy of attention, and necessary if they are to reclaim their traditional knowledge and rebuild their communities. All Aboriginal cultures firmly believe in the power of 'wholeness' and know the importance of maintaining balance within self and harmony with all things within the Creation. In order to achieve 'wholeness', the four aspects of self which include the spirit, heart, mind, and body must be aligned, and the task of balancing these energies, both external and internal of self, is a continuous process."

That is, Aboriginal programming, including and especially literacy, needs to consider growth in four areas: spirit, heart, mind and body. Traditionally, institutional education programming concerned itself with the mind. This means, then, that programming that is not holistic ignores the person. It is no wonder the system has failed many Aboriginal Peoples. One coordinator put it eloquently when she said, "The learners come to our program feeling comfortable for the first time. In the mainstream system, they often felt like square pegs trying to fit into a round hole."

A dominant theme in Aboriginal communities for quite some time now is that of self-determination. In fact, ***Aboriginal Control of Education: Still Waiting,*** (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, November 1996) states that "education is a core element of jurisdiction in Aboriginal self-government", and that, "Education is seen as the vehicle for enhancing the life of the individual and reaching collective goals."

Literacy is the foundation to education. This means rebuilding communities.

Literacy programs, therefore, need to focus on how the learner relates, not only to him/herself, but also to his/her family, community, nation and the universe.

Now to a more detailed consideration of some of the characteristics which the ***Language of Literacy*** has determined are relevant to the "surviving and thriving" of Aboriginal literacy programming.

Critical Indicator #1 — Safe and Welcoming Environment

Data from the survey strongly supports that the most important factor, from the standpoint of the learners and the practitioners, was a safe and welcoming environment. Many are the practitioners for whom literacy is not just a job — it's a vocation, a calling. They become involved in literacy because they believe that they can make a difference in someone's life. The practitioners know in their hearts to treat a learner as a whole person, an individual with skills and strengths that he/she may not yet have recognized.

In fact, William Purkey and John Novak (1984) have coined the phrase — an "invitational approach to education", which they have defined as: "the process by which people are cordially summoned to realize their relatively boundless potential".

Purkey and Novak have identified characteristics that emulate an invitational approach:

- respect for individual uniqueness
- cooperative spirit
- sense of belonging
- positive expectations

Aboriginal literacy practitioners certainly do their utmost to exhibit all of these in every aspect of programming.

Often the learners' first impression of the literacy program is from having seen either the recruitment advertisements posted somewhere, or having encountered the coordinator at a function in the community. A well-worded ad conveys a lot about the program. Because of the stigma attached to literacy, many programs will give themselves a name that sends a positive message – Choices, Hungry for Knowledge, PEN (Personal Education for Natives). In addition, this ad often contains something to let people know that every aspect of participation is confidential – from intake, to assessment, to tutoring. (Frequently, however, learners choose to identify themselves as literacy program participants after being in the program because of the positive impact it has had on their lives.)

Effective literacy coordinators are visible in the community, through making presentations at various meetings, serving on committees, or attending community functions. Because of this, potential learners see them as real people who have a genuine concern for the betterment of the community and, thus, the individuals. Learners then feel more comfortable in approaching them, or the program.

Aboriginal literacy programs are housed in different types of buildings – either in schools, community colleges, community learning centres, or band offices – and, in some cases, tutoring sessions take place at kitchen tables in someone's home. Wherever the programs or sessions are, practitioners do their utmost to make the location feel welcoming and inviting. They do this by having as informal and as uninstitutional an atmosphere as possible. Some practitioners have decorated the walls with Aboriginal material – role model posters, artwork (from calendars, events posters, or donations from community members, including learners), motivational sayings, etc. Most programs have a requisite coffee machine; some even have a fridge or stove. In this way, learners can feel free to have a coffee and relax a bit before getting into the actual work. Those programs lucky enough to acquire a fridge and stove often have the learners trade recipes and/or make lunch. A good meal makes it easier to concentrate on studies, and participants learn more recipes to try at home. In fact, some literacy programs have even included nutrition as part of the course offerings, and have produced cookbooks which include recipes from the learners, and/or old favourites. One program even had the learners plant, maintain and harvest a garden!

Literacy is the foundation to education!

Depending on the setting (college, community organization), intake and assessment can range from formal to quite informal. In order to alleviate any anxiety the learners might feel, coordinators do their best to assure the learners that this procedure is to identify their strengths, and to assist staff in designing a learning plan that best meets the learners' needs and interests. One practitioner summed this up succinctly:

"We work the training plan around you. The intake and assessment gives me the information I need for the program to give you the best help possible."

It has all too often happened that the assessment results can be somewhat disappointing for the learner, and the coordinators have exhibited a great deal of empathy, while focusing on the learner's accomplishments, and helping him/her to identify factors that may have contributed to the results. Rather than learners seeing unsatisfactory assessment results as their personal deficiency, they are encouraged to see that learning happens and is retained in a context. If that context is less than optimal, such as a mismatch in teaching and learning styles or inappropriate curriculum, then the learning can be as well. In fact, many learners have come to understand that they have exhibited a lot of strengths just in surviving the less than optimal learning environment.

Coordinators have exhibited a great deal of empathy...

Literacy practitioners make a point of encouraging learners' progress and then celebrating their achievements. Many a program has designed certificates, and has even hosted Graduation/Achievement events to which family and community members are invited. One even hosted a celebration party for a learner who made that all-important decision to enter a treatment centre. Learners' work is often displayed in the centre, or published in a pertinent publication, such as a community newsletter. Community members and potential learners see these accomplishments, and feel more motivated to see what the literacy program is all about.

Several programs that have been in operation for a number of years suggest that word of mouth is their best recruitment method. It is not difficult to pick up on the positive energy from practitioners and learners in Aboriginal literacy programs. It is no wonder that learners say consistently that they much appreciated the safe and welcoming environment of Aboriginal literacy programs, where they are encouraged to be the best they can be, not to compete with anyone but themselves. They have said that this is such a stark contrast to the institutional education system.

Critical Indicator #2 — Supportive Community Leadership

Without a doubt, support for the literacy program is necessary if it is to survive, flourish and be effective. All of the aforementioned challenges in the "Common Threads" section indicate where both the practitioners and the learners require many different kinds of support, some of which are:

- funding — without restrictive criteria
- curriculum resources
- input/feedback on how to deal with the many issues that may be affecting learning
- day care
- counselling
- transportation

Often, the most effective way to obtain these resources is through a productive working relationship with the community leadership – political and spiritual.

The political leadership is in a position to ensure that literacy is a priority in the community, and to advocate for monies to be allocated through the community/organizational budget. In addition, they are able to lobby for more literacy dollars at the local, provincial and national levels of government.

The spiritual leadership contributes to a holistic approach to literacy by encouraging the program to balance its goals and objectives, between the economic goals often pursued by government funding parties and the more traditional Aboriginal approaches which tend to stress the education of the whole person for the intrinsic value gained from that experience.

The participation of the leadership in literacy program initiatives gives it a higher profile and credibility in the community. This participation requires that they understand literacy to be more than reading and writing. Literacy also includes speaking and listening, which along with reading and writing, enables learners to participate more fully in the decisions that affect their lives. When the community sees the leadership endorsing the program, and participating in its activities, such as an Open House or a fund raiser, the message is loud and clear – literacy is important!

There is an unusual situation with one of the urban Aboriginal literacy programs, located in a friendship centre, that clearly illustrates how important the support of the leadership can be. A non-Aboriginal program in the area has been struggling to maintain its enrolment, which may in turn mean less funding in future fiscal years, and has been pressuring the Aboriginal program to service only learners on the nearby First Nations communities, so that the urban learners can avail themselves of the services of this non-Aboriginal program. Currently, the Aboriginal program is working with approximately 100 learners a year, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, which is in keeping with the mandate of the host organization.

The Executive Director and the Board of Directors for the centre point to their mandate, and say that they will continue to service the learners from the urban area who choose to come to their literacy program. It is their firm belief that the learners, as the most important people in the program, must have a choice as to which literacy classes they attend. The leadership is supporting the literacy program in continuing to meet the needs of the learners who, of their own volition, have participated in the centre's program for quite some time. This stance ensures minimal impact on the learners.

Critical Indicator #3 –
Competent Program Staff

Coordinators, as a whole, are not only completely committed to the concept of adult learning and Aboriginal literacy, but we suspect that, in the absence of sufficient "fuel" to run the program, their commitment alone sometimes ensures the survival of program offerings. Many were the instances that program resources were so scarce that

one had to conclude that it was amazing that the program still ran at all. We were tremendously impressed with the "make do" attitude of practitioners who, despite sparse financing, were able to operate credible adult basic literacy programs for adults.

There are many instances where literacy coordinators inspired family and friends to provide volunteer services, including tutoring, organizing events, donating furniture and other relevant materials, or putting their skills to work in the program, such as servicing the computers or developing curriculum. In fact, one practitioner has what she refers to as a "perpetual victims list" – people she knows she can call on when the arduous task of fund raising again becomes necessary.

These same staff are often putting in hours over and above what is visible at the literacy program and what is called for in the contract. One of the consultants working on ***The Language of Literacy*** has spoken with many a practitioner who takes the administrative portion of work home to do in the evenings and on weekends, as time at the program is devoted to the learner – which in the belief of the practitioner is as it should be. Further, literacy learners often participate in, or host, community events which, of necessity, take place during other than class time, i.e., in the evenings and on weekends. Many coordinators also report seeing learners at the store, or at another community function, and if the learner has not been attending classes or is going through something in his/her life, this contact can turn into an informal counselling session.

Staff are, in fact, wizards at balancing the delivery and administrative demands of programming, along with providing extracurricular support to learners struggling with social or cultural issues that often arise. Many are expected to do their own program or funding proposals, statistical and narrative reports, recruit and train tutors, recruit and maintain learners, offer the best support possible to those learners, and participate in other community initiatives. It is not unusual for literacy practitioners to be constantly upgrading their skills in order to fulfill all these requirements. Many are also life-skills coaches; some have teaching certificates; many are constantly on the lookout for workshops and conferences that either nurture their own minds and spirits, or give them enhanced skills to do the same with the learners; and, a significant number are doing post-secondary courses with assignments geared specifically to work that they are doing in literacy.

Often, during the course of the program, learners will be "triggered" by an event, or even just by the fact of being in an academic setting. If they have experienced abuse in a somewhat similar situation, feelings that have long been buried may surface. Because of their firm belief in the holistic approach, practitioners understand almost intuitively that the disassociation or confusion in learners that can occur in these instances are only symptoms, they are not the illness. The illness is what is often referred to as "soul-robbing" – an incident of abuse that is so severe that the victims may spend the rest of their lives without really developing an identity – they never really heal from the abuse that has occurred on a spiritual, emotional, mental or physical level.

Maggie Hodgson, Executive Director, Nechi Training, Research and Health Promotions Institute, Edmonton, Alberta says in her

paper, ***The Impact of Residential Schools and Other Root Causes of Poor Mental Health*** (Suicide, Family Violence, Alcohol and Drug Abuse), that residential school attendees experienced fear, loneliness, and hopelessness, which are precursors to depression. They learned to be incongruent in their social behaviour, so as to avoid abuse. Such behaviour contributes to confusion and disassociation. These behaviours can be long-term and even generational.

> Fear, loneliness and hopelessness... precursors to depression

In her breakthrough book, ***Awakening Intuition: Using Your Mind-Body Network for Insight and Healing***, Mona Lisa Schulz, M.D., Ph.D. explains "soul-robbing" in a scientific/medical sense: "At the time of trauma in the past, we secreted the stress hormones cortisol and norepinephrine.... When we recall that traumatic memory, the brain and the body release these hormones again and again. What that means is that when we find ourselves in an environment that evokes a traumatic memory, we interpret it as being stressful and traumatic, just like the past. Our bodies experience it as if a real trauma were occurring, even though it's only a memory, only like a bad dream. The body is shaking as though we've been having nightmares all night, even though we're only reliving a pattern encoded in the brain....

...So if you're repetitively reliving and re-experiencing a traumatizing memory, two things happen: You begin to see the pattern of that memory everywhere and re-create it in the present, and it causes the area in your body that carries the metaphor for the trauma to steal energy from other areas that are normal and to reinforce the disease in the area..."

An enlightened Aboriginal literacy practitioner may not have the scientific/medical background to put the experiences of the learners into these words, but they know enough to honour the feelings of the learners through offering empathy, and nurturing the learner towards an understanding of what is happening. In many cases, the staff has to deal with the issue right then and there, without the luxury of being able to refer the learner elsewhere for counselling. Often, that staff person feels it would only be perpetuating the cycle of abuse to simply refer the learner to what some funding parties consider to be a "more appropriate department". Rather, the practitioners work with the learner in a way that helps him/her to get through that feeling that day, and to move forward. They may refer and/or take the learner to a counsellor only after a bond of trust has been established. In this way, the referral is not seen as an abandonment; rather, it is seen as a widening of the learner's support network – and the practitioner's as well.

It would be fair to say that Aboriginal literacy practitioners are the unsung heroes of their communities. It would be more accurate to suggest that most are in the field for the satisfaction that comes from knowing that they have done something for someone, i.e., for the sake of the learners and, thus, the community – for the intrinsic rewards, not the extrinsic.

Critical Indicator #4 – Community Support Resources

To reiterate, Aboriginal literacy practitioners firmly believe that the most important part of the program is the learner. Learners are people in a variety of situations. Many are single parents, some are older people who have either been displaced in their jobs by technology, several may have never worked at a salaried job, and have decided that it is time to do so. Still others are youth who have dropped out of school for any number of reasons, and who have learned the hard way that education is one of the keys to getting and keeping a job.

Often learners have the desire to upgrade their skills, but getting to the literacy program may pose a problem. Some communities have been resourceful in arranging for transportation with the support of the First Nations administration or the local Friendship Centre. Other practitioners spend a lot of their own time and use their personal vehicle, taking learners to program events, and, in some cases, even to appointments. Where public transportation is available, practitioners are sometimes in a position to provide transportation tickets at the end of each day. In many cases, the dollars have not been allocated through the core grant, and programs have to rely on fundraising and donations to provide this much-needed service.

A variety of situations have been noted for learners who are single parents. Some literacy programs either have access to day-care facilities, where a certain number of spots have been set aside for them, or they have helped learners to acquire day-care subsidies. It is not unusual to have the learner bring a child to class if all else fails. At least one of the researchers for this project has noticed children occupying themselves with a book or a game while mom is in "school". It is highly unlikely that those same learners would have that option in an institutional environment. One can only speculate as to what would happen.

Sometimes, either the learner or someone in his/her family may be going through a crucial life event – an illness, an accident, a death, flashbacks. In many cases, the practitioner offers a listening ear and heart. In other cases, the learner may require additional support. Most certainly, the practitioners need input and feedback as to the efficacy of the assistance they are providing to the learner. Many coordinators have reported that a strong support system is a much needed and very appreciated resource for them. Sometimes this support system is in the form of a specific Literacy Support Committee, or Social Services Committee. A fortunate few are able to access services from pertinent people – family support workers, substance counsellors, etc. In many cases, these people are either not available or have waiting lists, so the practitioner has to again rely on family and friends, or co-workers.

Older people... displaced in their jobs by technology!

What if a dollar value were placed on the types of support services that the practitioner provides over and above the actual job

requirements, that family bestows, and that community members and organizations contribute, sometimes without even knowing it? They are just responding in the best way they know how, because they care and because it is in the Aboriginal teachings that what happens to one, happens to all. Even a ballpark estimate of these deeds could be an invaluable inclusion on the grant application under the line item, "in-kind services".

Practitioner offers a listening ear and heart.

Critical Indicator #5 – Adequate Human and Financial Resources

From the previous chapter, and from the points raised in this chapter, it can be concluded without doubt that adequate human and financial resources are critical to offering an effective literacy program. In many cases, the coordinator is the sole person having to do every aspect of programming. While she is doing her utmost, it has proven to be far more beneficial for the program, and thus, the community when there are sufficient monies to have an adequate staff complement and support materials, such as curriculum and resources.

When regular Aboriginal literacy program staff are away at various training functions they often recruit and provide a per diem to people knowledgeable about the program in order to keep it open, thereby enabling learners to continue their learning uninterrupted.

Some programs have been able to access dollars through other sources – Canadian Give the Gift of Literacy; Local Delivery Mechanisms (Regional Bilateral Agreements – HRDC), First Nations communities, local corporate sponsors – to hire staff for specific initiatives, such as developing and/or adapting culture-based materials, then field-testing them. This has contributed to the growth of materials specifically with the Aboriginal adult literacy learner in mind.

Still other programs have a particular interest in offering computer literacy skills to their learners. Computer literacy is often understood to mean two things – learning the basic functions of the computer (opening and closing files; inputting and editing, etc.) so as to make use of the computer for doing stories and/or lessons; or, using various education software packages that develop and/or enhance literacy. Practitioners recognize that computers are an integral part of academic and work life, so that learners are acquiring a basic work skill at the same time. In fact, a number of programs have Internet access for their learners so that they can do research, and have electronic exchanges with like-minded people around the world. This means having the resources to acquire the computer(s) and the software (including the infrastructure to support Internet access) and to maintain them. Computer-literate staff offer the introductory lessons and ongoing *ad hoc* assistance. In one program, the computer instructor kept a portion of class-time open so that students could complete their homework assignments from the academics portion on the computers – a real-life application of the computer skills.

Critical Indicator #6 –
Relevant, Personalized Programming

Practitioners and learners both have stated emphatically that the community-based, learner-centred perspective of Aboriginal literacy programs is their main attraction. That is, the programs focus on the learners' strengths, interests, needs and aspirations; they make use of the resources in the community; and, they contribute to overall goals of the community. Coordinators assist learners in identifying the strengths and skills that they have exhibited in their significant life experiences, and that they can transfer to the classroom or other situations. In many academic circles, this is known as Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), for which learners can receive credits and/or advanced standing in education institutions that use such an approach. PLA is a much more involved and lengthy process, but literacy programs often apply its principles and practices to the learners. In this way, practitioners teach learners to identify the learning they have done in each and every life situation.

Aboriginal literacy practitioners use "learner-centred" programming in the true sense of the phrase. This is not to be confused with some curriculum packages that also say that they are learner-centred. Essentially, in this case, it means that the learner can proceed through the package at his/her own rate, and in any order he/she chooses – but the learners are all still using the same package. In Aboriginal literacy programs, practitioners get a "snapshot" from the intake and assessment of where the learner has been, what he/she has done, what his/her strengths and accomplishments are, and where he/she wants to be. This information is then used to tailor a learning plan geared specifically to the learner's needs.

Producing and adapting materials for a specific learning situation takes considerable time. Many practitioners have invested this time and energy, knowing that the lessons can be shared with other learners, even other programs. Often, though, coordinators are under time constraints and multiple demands, so they are not able to invest the necessary time. Therefore, staff have been creative in using whatever works to make mass-produced materials more relevant to the learners' lives. More than one program where English is not the learners' first language has made use of the learners' Aboriginal language to assist with the pronunciation, meaning and retention of the English text in the materials. Still others have had the learners supplement the materials with stories and experiences from their own lives. In fact, some programs have taken learners on field trips and have developed reading, writing, listening and speaking exercises from the planning stages right through to the evaluation. Examples of such trips include visiting the local cultural centre, participating in events, picking medicines (sweetgrass) or taking part in an anniversary celebration of the community or host organization.

One innovative program reports that the local school can tell which children have parents in the literacy program – they show up for parent interviews, often prepared with questions and recommendations, and they ensure that the children complete their homework and attend regularly. In one of the learner input sessions of the literacy program, the learners had expressed their

concerns about being a more effective resource to their children in school, and the practitioner devoted a module to assisting them with exactly that.

Some Aboriginal literacy programs have been able to hire staff through National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) dollars for specific learner-centred/relevant initiatives. An Aboriginal literacy kit recently released by Parkland Regional College in Yorkton, Saskatchewan and entitled, ***Reaching the Rainbow, Aboriginal Literacy in Canada*** details some of the innovative projects from information posted on the Internet by the National Adult Literacy Database. Examples include: promoting the official languages of the Northwest Territories, integrating literacy into land claims initiatives, developing curriculum for adults with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome within the context of an employment skills training program, developing an Aboriginal peer tutor literacy model and developing training for Aboriginal literacy peer and community tutors, developing literacy tutors to work one-on-one with youth at risk; developing a tutor guide using oral history from Elders in the area; developing a strategy for improving the quality of life for disabled Aboriginal Peoples through literacy; and, developing and field-testing materials reflective of the culture, to name but a few.

These worthwhile and, sometimes, Herculean efforts of Aboriginal literacy practitioners to make programming relevant and personalized require a vehicle by which these initiatives can become more well-known and widely distributed. It would save many people a lot of time if they were made aware of the guiding principles, the process, and the result (along with a sample) of each of these activities.

Critical Indicator #7 — Curriculum

Clearly, there is no one-size-fits-all curriculum, and, it can be argued that there are as many reasons for literacy as there are learners. Learners' motivations are many: a desire to secure employment or obtain a better job, to be able to do the books in a small business, to be able to help their kids with their homework. Aboriginal literacy practitioners have jumped through many a hoop to get a variety of curricula and support materials that best meets the needs of their learners and their community. They have continually researched what works and what doesn't work at different reading levels, and have acquired an eclectic collection of excellent resource material.

> Tailor a learning plan geared specifically to the learner's needs

In a community college setting, where the Aboriginal literacy program often has to use the curriculum of the local board of education or community college, the enhancements and adaptations mentioned in the previous section have been used to make the materials more relevant to the learners' lives. In fact, one instructor took the modules from the packaged curriculum and made a list of the spelling, grammar and punctuation

rules that were being taught. She then reconstructed the curriculum using books that the learners could identify with – ***In Search of April Raintree*** by Beatrice Culleton, ***The Mishomis Book*** by Eddie Benton-Banai, and ***Half-Breed*** by Maria Campbell.

In a more structured program in the Atlantic region where the local Aboriginal language is thriving, the learning materials used are predominantly English. However, it was most fascinating to observe adult learners speaking with each other in the classroom using their Aboriginal language to help each other understand "English" or non-Aboriginal concepts. In one sense, this is the best of both worlds – where a vibrant Aboriginal language is used to further explain and reinforce new learning experiences in one of the two official languages. One can surmise that where Aboriginal languages are healthy and surviving well within the adult community of learners that it is often used as a teaching vehicle to learn 'foreign' concepts!

Alpha Plus Centre (in Ontario) recognized that practitioners are constantly on the lookout for curriculum and support materials for their learners. They also understand that practitioners often order curriculum from a catalogue without having the opportunity to see the actual content. The Aboriginal Field Consultant made it a point to review some of the curriculum, noting its approximate grade level, the content, issues raised and to suggest possible learning and follow-up activities. This material has been posted on an electronic conference, and hard copies were sent out to programs who were not online. Copies are available at the Alpha Plus Centre, and can be ordered by asking for "NatLearn '96" and "NatLearn '97".

It is a given that the lessons in curriculum kits (and support materials) move at a different pace and in a different order from the events in a learner's life. Practitioners, therefore, have become adept at developing some of their own activities and/or worksheets to supplement the curricula.

Many learners prefer the learner-centred approach. Therefore, practitioners develop curriculum with the learner, using what is often referred to as the language experience approach, in which the learner's own experiences form the basis of learner-generated stories. Practitioners are extremely creative in structuring learning activities from these stories to develop the various types of comprehension – literal, inferential, critical, appreciative – and to foster a wide range of reading and writing skills. Still others have developed family literacy curricula to assist learners in being able to share meaningful learning activities with and for their children. In addition, there are a number of initiatives across Canada that have developed ways of incorporating indigenous knowledge into the curriculum, even basing it on Aboriginal teaching and learning practices. Such approaches demand much time and energy. They also require learners to have an internal locus of control; i.e., they can gauge their progress on how much knowledge they have gained, and the qualitative changes that they see in their lives. Oftentimes, learners with an external locus of control measure achievement by how many grade levels they have advanced, or how many workbooks they have completed.

Many learners have the goal of continuing onto further education and/or training. Their curriculum then focuses on the pre-

requisites of that education and/or training. Practitioners either collect the information, or, if the learners are at a stage in their lives that they can do the research themselves, then that is the preferred method, as it is empowering for the learner.

Practitioners have become adept at tracking down curriculum resources they can find, then augmenting them by adapting and/or developing their own to best meet the needs of their learners and their communities. Programs – and learners – would certainly benefit from a vehicle by which to share this excellent work.

Finally, it is clear that Aboriginal literacy programming, regardless of the variation in style and substance currently prevalent in communities, is fully committed to a fundamental tenet of traditional adult education. Programs are consistently learner-centred and, more importantly, address the desires and needs of the whole person. We have frequently found program initiatives where the value of the individual and his or her self-worth are the primary guiding principles of programming. No distinction is made between the young adult with potentially marketable skills and the elder with little formal education who attends a literacy program to improve their literacy skills attracted by a comfortable and mutually supportive social environment.

♦♦♦

"Education is a fundamental part of our community regardless of age."

♦♦♦

Chapter Six

THE NATIONAL LITERACY SECRETARIAT: A BASKET OF ANNOTATED PROJECTS

One of the most important and pressing questions we were asked by Aboriginal literacy practitioners and coordinators in the course of our work was, "Who funds literacy work?" As most practitioners know from their own experience, finding the resources to put instructors or tutors in a classroom is difficult enough. But many also stated that there are other related activities that would help Aboriginal literacy programs reach greater numbers of Aboriginal learners or work more successfully with those currently enrolled.

"Who funds literacy work?"

Many practitioners would like to develop culturally-relevant curriculum appropriate to an Aboriginal clientele, increase community awareness of the importance of literacy for First Nations people, do outreach work or conduct a needs assessment in Aboriginal communities, but are unable to find the resources to carry out these important support activities. For these reasons, we have included information here on other Aboriginal organizations which have received funding from the National Literacy Secretariat of the federal department of Human Resources Development Canada to help them develop and promote their literacy programs.

Since its establishment in 1987, the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) has been working with its partners to promote literacy in Canada. It supports programs which help to make Canada's social, economic and political life more accessible to people with weak literacy skills. As well as working with provincial and territorial governments, NLS works in partnership with a variety of non-governmental and voluntary organizations, both literacy and non-literacy groups and business and labour organizations. Although it does not fund the provision of direct, ongoing literacy services (operating costs), the NLS has funded a wide range of related activities and projects which are directed at meeting regional or local needs. NLS has funded over 2700 projects, which generally fall into one or more of the following areas:

- Research
- Development of learning materials
- The improvement of coordination and information sharing
- The improvement of access and outreach
- Increasing public awareness

Many Aboriginal literacy programs have benefited from NLS support in the past and continue to do so. Here, we have provided only a few examples of projects funded between 1990 and 1998, to provide an idea of the wide range of projects and activities which the NLS has partnered with Aboriginal community groups and organizations across the country. We have used NLS' own categorization of its areas of support, but in reality, you will see that our examples often combine elements of research, training, coordination, curriculum development, outreach and direct service delivery and do not fall neatly into any one category.

Research

At times, research is needed to help groups respond effectively to community and workplace literacy needs. NLS funds a range of research initiatives, such as needs assessments, literacy program evaluations, and studies of the needs or barriers to access of particular segments of the population. In the past, NLS funding to Aboriginal organizations for research has been spent largely on needs-assessment studies. Many of the groups which received funding for research were just beginning to assess the particular needs of their communities for literacy programming. Some were interested in targeting the needs of particular sub-groups within their communities, for example, youth or young mothers. The goal for most of these communities was to develop a plan for establishing a literacy program to meet the specific needs of the target group.

Other examples of research projects include the following:

- Native Council of Prince Edward Island (1997/98) received NLS funding to carry out research to determine the barriers that prohibit Off-reserve Aboriginal learners from obtaining literacy training.

- Kwakiutl District Council of BC (1997/98) conducted research in preparation for the development of instructional strategies and an appropriate outreach structure for literacy programs which would serve the four bands in the Campbell River region.

- Sioux-Hudson Literacy Council of Sioux Lookout, Ontario (1996/97) was supported by the NLS to conduct a literacy survey to gather quantitative and qualitative data on literacy-related issues: past and current barriers to participation, the purposed and perceived value of literacy and what constitutes a positive learning environment for the Aboriginal community of Sioux-Hudson. The study was designed to assist the Council in re-evaluating and creating more attractive programs for adult Aboriginal learners.

- Kenamatewin Native Learning Centre of Ontario (1995/96) conducted research in their efforts to develop a comprehensive assessment tool to assess reading and numeracy skills which would be culturally relevant for Aboriginal people.

- Mi'kmaq First Nations Literacy Council of PEI (1995/96) received funding to conduct a survey of the Aboriginal community in the province to identify literacy needs and to develop culturally-sensitive literacy programming.

- Moosonee Native Friendship Centre of Ontario (1995/96) received NLS funding to conduct a feasibility study for developing literacy programming for remote First Nations communities in its area and to pilot a model for implementing satellite literacy training.

Learning Materials

Many Aboriginal literacy practitioners with whom we spoke told us that they are or would like to be developing curricula, assessment tools and materials which are appropriate to the needs, culture, interests, and learning style of their Aboriginal adult

learners. However, curriculum development takes time and resources which are often beyond the scope of small literacy initiatives. It might be helpful to know that the largest proportion of NLS funding over the years has gone to the acquisition or development of learning materials to meet the needs of specific learning communities. NLS has effectively partnered many Aboriginal organizations in developing or acquiring culturally-appropriate materials and curricula. For example, in some initiatives, Elders' stories have been professionally recorded and converted into learning materials for classroom use. A more recent trend within the area of development of learning materials is learner involvement in the project. In some cases, literacy students themselves are taught interviewing skills, record the stories and practice their written skills by doing the transcriptions. They may then be involved the work of formatting, publishing and marketing the resulting compilation of stories.

Another type of activity within this category is the development of resources for literacy instructors or tutors. In some cases, this was curriculum development for a particular group of learners, including curriculum and lesson plans. In other cases, funding was received for the development of a handbook which could be used by tutors or instructors to improve their instructional skills. Where appropriate, the materials developed by the various Aboriginal organizations was distributed or made available to other organizations and agencies which might benefit from its use.

A few examples of this type of activity are:

- Unama'ki Training and Education Centre of Nova Scotia (1997/98) was supported to develop a Level-2 literacy curriculum tailored to the needs and cultural learning style of the Mi'kmaq community. The project builds on the Mi'kmaq Basic Upgrading Program prepared in 1996, also with funding from the NLS, by producing a comprehensive Level-2 curriculum package, involving a holistic approach to math, science and social studies through culturally-sensitive materials and community-based experience. The project included the production of culturally-relevant thematic videos and a facilitator's guide for educators working with Mi'kmaq literacy learners.

- Circle Project of Saskatchewan (1997/98), through its Back to Basics project, received NLS funding to develop a comprehensive training tool to assist other literacy providers and their organizations in providing adult Aboriginal literacy that is based on a holistic approach, including various modules on culture and life-skills from an Aboriginal perspective. The project also presented workshops to enhance practical use of the guide, as well as training to address the increasing need for strong literacy programs within the Aboriginal community.

- Dauphin Friendship Centre of Manitoba (1996/97) was funded by the NLS to research and develop a handbook and curriculum focusing on the Aboriginal history of the region. The curriculum was developed by staff, volunteers, learners and resource people from the community using a participatory methodology, and copies of the handbook were provided to other literacy programs in Manitoba.

- The Metis National Council of Women in Ottawa (1996/97) as part of the Metis Women's Literacy initiative, received NLS funding to create a collection of learning materials that document, for the first time, the historical challenges faced and overcome by Metis women, including success stories of Metis women becoming literate.

- Central Regina Early Learning Centre in Saskatchewan (1995/96) received NLS funding to develop culturally-relevant learning materials for both parents and children enrolled at the Centre, and to be shared with community members.

- Can-Am Indian Friendship Centre of Windsor, Ontario (1994/95) was supported by the NLS to create and organize an Aboriginal Resource Library which would house materials and curriculum for Adult Basic Literacy.

Coordination and Information Sharing

Several Aboriginal organizations have been supported by the NLS to hold conferences or workshops which were intended to support networking and sharing on literacy issues within the Aboriginal community. Several groups have also received support to share information or to train others in utilizing tools they have developed. A few examples of such activities would be:

- Metis National Council in Ottawa (1996/97 and 1997/98) was supported to create a National Metis Forum on Literacy, to improve coordination and literacy information sharing among the people of the Metis Nation. The project was also designed to raise awareness of the needs and interests of Metis people in improving their literacy skills and to help develop Metis-specific learning materials to support the design of Metis literacy curricula.

- First Nations Education Steering Committee in BC (1995/96) was supported to conduct workshops on literacy needs, approaches and resources in four locations for First Nations representatives from throughout BC.

- Camosun College, The Sooke School District and the Pacheenaht Band of BC (1995/96) were funded to provide four two-day professional development cultural awareness workshops for Aboriginal leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and administrators.

- Lovesick Lake Native Women's Association of Ontario (1990/91) was supported to produce an information newsletter to promote literacy to Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in the Burleigh Falls area, and to provide information and promote literacy in rural workplaces.

- National Aboriginal Network on Disability in Ottawa (1990/91) received NLS funding to organize eight literacy-awareness workshops held across the country to promote action on literacy for disabled Aboriginal people.

Access and Outreach

In their efforts to provide access and outreach to Aboriginal learners, several of the

organizations received funding to support the training tutors, the matching of tutors with learners, or to develop special models or programs for working with specific subgroups within their communities: youth, young mothers, families, women etc. Other initiatives have attempted to address issues of service delivery to remote communities using distance education, computer-assisted learning, the Internet or other technologies. A few examples of NLS-funded projects which focus on improving access and outreach are:

- North Thompson Indian Band in BC (1997/98) developed the project 'Simpew Adaptation to Change 1930-1950' in which six learners were matched with six Elders. The learners were trained on how to conduct an interview, and were then responsible for interviewing the Elders and writing a publishable story. The topic of the interviews was the technological changes faced by the Band in the 1930-50 period. The goal of the project was to promote literacy skills of learners while learning about their culture from the Elders. The product was an anthology of stories to be distributed throughout the country.

- Windigo and Shibogama First Nations Council in Ontario (1996/97) received NLS support to develop and pilot a literacy program for the northern First Nations communities of the Sioux Lookout region. The purpose of the project was to produce a detailed model of literacy program delivery for hard-to-service areas. The model would determine the appropriate balance between learner-centred and distance education and what partnerships could be developed to deliver services. The project would also produce a manual detailing the appropriate curriculum for the delivery of literacy programs in fly-in communities.

- Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre (1996/97) was funded to develop an outreach program to strengthen and create partnerships with the Fort Erie community. The Centre would make available to the community learning resources such as books, videos, reading-writing programs, computer access, and math, some of which would be culturally specific to First Nations people.

The learners were trained on how to conduct an interview

Public Awareness

A common challenge faced by Aboriginal literacy practitioners and coordinators, as we have seen, has been the low priority, both within and outside the Aboriginal community, given to meeting the needs of adult learners. Public awareness is key to improved allocation of greater resources on behalf of Aboriginal adults with low literacy skills. Some public awareness activities supported by the NLS in the past are:

- Aboriginal Women in the Canadian Labour Force in Manitoba (1995/96) received support to hold a conference to raise awareness about labour force issues facing Aboriginal women. One of the key issues to be addressed was

literacy and how low literacy levels affect the full participation of Aboriginal women in the labour force.

- Congress of Aboriginal Peoples in Ottawa (1995/96) was funded to develop a video which would increase awareness within Aboriginal communities about the existence of a variety of approaches to literacy, different language-usage methods, and recognition of the rich Aboriginal heritage of language experience, both oral and written.

How to Apply for NLS Funding

As we said earlier, any non-profit organization can apply to the NLS for literacy-related activities, other than the provision of ongoing direct literacy services, activities which have already taken place or recurrent annual events. The NLS does not fund 100% of project costs, so any organization making an application for funding should be prepared to demonstrate its own in-kind contribution towards the project, or resources contributed by other sources. NLS funding does not cover capital costs, travel outside of Canada or financial losses incurred by projects.

To receive funding, a proposal must:

- Involve those who are affected by the project and reflect their concerns
- Demonstrate that the project does not duplicate existing efforts (by consulting the National Adult Literacy Database, for instance)
- Indicate other sources of financial or 'in-kind' support for the project
- Include an evaluation plan for the project
- Make provision for distribution or making available reports or other products arising from the project

For more information on NLS funding and how to apply, visit the Funding Guidelines page of the National Adult Literacy Database website at: http://www.nald.ca

or contact:

National Literacy Secretariat
Department of Human Resources Development
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1K5
Tel: (819) 953-5280 **Fax:** (819) 953-8076

Chapter Seven
OBSERVATIONS ON THE PATH AHEAD

There is little doubt about the significance of functional literacy in the lives of Aboriginal Canadians. It is not simply a question of acquiring essential social and survival skills or of opening gateways to the broader vistas of enrichment provided by adult education opportunities to those newly literate. The opportunities that any literate society can pursue are exponential when compared to those where illiteracy flourishes. Foremost among these opportunities is the ability to participate more actively in a democratic society, where the ability to make one's mark does not refer to an "X" in lieu of a signature. The primary objective in encouraging a functionally literate Aboriginal community in Canada is to create a democratic society where literacy is the key that opens the gateway to participation.

> "Literacy must be an extension of the cultural values..."

Within the sensitive arena of Aboriginal adult education few issues elicit as much controversy as literacy and the language in which it is acquired. Depending on the definition and the definer, an identical word, literacy, can represent, simultaneously, two value orientations and two methodologies producing two outcomes that are, frequently, in conflict. Without too stark a contradistinction, our research has determined that there are two schools of thought respecting the language of Aboriginal adult learning. The predominant orientation suggests that Aboriginal learners acquire functional literacy skills (reading, writing and numeracy) in the mainstream or dominant language, thereby dramatically improving both their economic and social prospects – although, some would argue, threatening the fragile cultural referents to their community.

Others argue that literacy must be an extension of the cultural values inculcated within each individual thereby demanding that one become literate within the parameters of one's cultural experience. In other words developing, first and foremost, a facility in the reading and writing of one's ancestral mother tongue, even if this sustains a continued isolation from the economic mainstream.

It was never the intention of this narrative research and analysis to support or advocate either approach. What has become abundantly clear, however, is that regardless of the language of instruction, be it Ojibway, Mi'kmaq or English, a familiar and culturally-relevant learning environment is the most significant factor in determining the longevity of the learning experience and the persistence of the learner as he/she pursues new horizons. Those programs that utilize a mainstream curriculum significantly enhanced by culturally-relevant materials both challenge the learner and speak directly to the personal history of the learner and her relationship to the community – both current and ancestral. Bluntly put, a learning environment that

challenges and contradicts the negative, foreign and soul-numbing history of previous "education" experiences encourages the learner to overcome reluctance and suspicion and to flourish.

While the program profiles in this resource directory speak eloquently for themselves, as we have indicated in detail in Chapters Four and Five, a number of themes have emerged during the course of our interviews and data collection that we believe will substantially enhance our current understanding of the status of Aboriginal literacy programming in Canada.

The observation cited elsewhere in this Resource Directory concerning the unanticipated time it has taken to mine through the institutional layers of information (or, lack thereof which would be more appropriate in some jurisdictions) offers the following principal corollary. Aboriginal literacy programs and their coordinators and volunteers are diamonds in the rough, labouring long and hard, too often in isolation and without the support of peers and like-minded advocates. Outside of their operating milieu, they are not well-known. In many instances, finding these diamonds has taken a lot more digging than originally anticipated, penetrating through many more layers of secondary stakeholders than was originally thought necessary or possible! In all jurisdictions save two, the theme of isolation and the concurrent issues of information-sharing, networking, professional development and peer validation processes were noticeable, respectively, by their presence and absence!

As important as the first theme, is the uniform inadequacy of financial resources available to Aboriginal literacy programming in Canada. This has been a consistent refrain throughout all of our interviews and while there are certainly significant variations in levels of program support within and across jurisdictions, even those programs with larger endowments or access to a variety of sources of funding often struggle to maintain a minimum level of consistent service. Many of these exceptionally dedicated program coordinators and their staff operate, as indicated earlier in the directory "from hand to mouth and on a shoestring." There have been few exceptions to this rule. Two evident and important factors affected by this program malaise are the ability of staff to maintain a consistent level of comprehensive professional programming and to effectively reach and provide learning opportunities to those who need it. The ratio of the target population involved in Aboriginal literacy programming versus that which would stand to benefit from it, is significant.

> Few issues elicit as much controversy as literacy...

As well, consultants were impressed with the substantial variation of program approaches and methodologies. From Laubach to computer-based learning, there is a rich and wide vein of experience and useful program information that works effectively in these communities and opportunities should be found to more fully and rigorously explore their utility and appropriateness. Should opportunities also develop that would permit Aboriginal literacy program coordinators and practitioners to come together and share this information and inform a broader literacy public about

the variety of program approaches within the Aboriginal community, it would certainly enrich the movement.

Finally, it is clear that Aboriginal literacy programming, regardless of the variation in style and substance currently prevalent in communities, is fully committed to a fundamental tenet of traditional adult education. Programs are consistently learner-centred and, more importantly, address the desires and needs of the whole person. We have frequently found program initiatives where the value of the individual and his or her self-worth are the primary guiding principles of programming. No distinction is made between the young adult with potentially marketable skills and the elder with little formal education who attends a literacy program to improve their literacy skills attracted by a comfortable and mutually supportive social environment.

Another dynamic outcome of the interviews with program practitioners and coordinators is an initiative that we are particularly excited about. And it is appropriate that we conclude on the promise and potential of an idea that may produce long-lasting results. Obviously, our interviews with literacy practitioners across the country explored a number of themes and ideas close to the hearts of Aboriginal literacy practitioners. Among these, one that surfaced repeatedly and generated substantial interest was the possibility of organizing a national gathering of Aboriginal literacy practitioners. The gathering would provide an opportunity both for professional development and networking, conversely, reducing the feelings of "professional isolation" expressed by many with whom we spoke. Such a gathering or national conference could have a number of objectives, foremost among them a dynamic opportunity for Aboriginal literacy practitioners and other stakeholders to come together, share experiences and information and begin the process of establishing and consolidating a mutually supportive national network that would serve to inform, support and validate the contributions and work of Aboriginal literacy practitioners and other professionals.

Shaping an agenda resulting from our consultations to date, the most frequently cited objectives of such a gathering appear to be:

- To assess how far the Aboriginal literacy movement has come and what has been accomplished since the movement began in earnest in the mid-1980s
- To explore in detail the outstanding challenges, problems and opportunities currently confronting the Aboriginal literacy movement in the areas of programming, learner motivation, curriculum, training, advocacy, and networking
- To create a forum which will encourage practitioners to share their experiences, their professional observations and to "tell their stories"
- To participate in professionally-organized training opportunities specifically designed to meet the current needs of practitioners attending the gathering
- To design strategies that will increase the public profile of Aboriginal literacy and to identify points of access to the public policy process in order to advocate Aboriginal literacy program issues

- To advise governments on the most appropriate public policy initiatives relating to Aboriginal literacy

- To examine the challenges confronting the Aboriginal literacy movement, to consolidate networking opportunities and structures for the future

The gathering or conference will also provide a forum encouraging practitioners to share their experiences and to participate in professionally-organized training opportunities specifically designed to meet the current needs of practitioners attending the gathering. Strategies designed to increase the public profile of Aboriginal literacy and to identify points of access to the public policy process in order to advocate Aboriginal literacy program issues could also be on the agenda.

The process of planning and implementing the conference would demand as much care and attention as the conference itself. As such we have proposed the creation of a National Network Design Committee (NNDC), a nationally representative grouping of Aboriginal literacy practitioners and professionals (a committee of four or five with two facilitators – logistical coordinators) which will gradually assume responsibility for the planning and implementation of the national gathering. We are hopeful that this initiative will prove fruitful for Aboriginal literacy professionals.

The Step by Step Early Learning Centre and Beverly Anne Sabourin and Associates hope that ***The Language of Literacy:*** *A National Resource Directory of Aboriginal Literacy Programs* and the potential of a national gathering of Aboriginal literacy practitioners and coordinators will provide additional attention to an education movement that is critical to the future of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. We are proud to be associated with this initiative, believing that this initiative will provide significant opportunities for the Aboriginal literacy movement in Canada to acquire crucial information and access to resources that will chart the course for Aboriginal literacy in the immediate future. If ***The Language of Literacy*** serves to excite and incite, it has, indeed served its purpose well!

In the Forward to ***The Language of Literacy,*** renowned novelist and playwright Tomson Highway added his usual eloquence to the vital, emerging and rich vocabulary of Aboriginal learning when he suggests that "This exciting new journey has only just begun, however. And the road still to be travelled is long and winding." Knowing the commitment brought to the language of Aboriginal literacy by the practitioners and coordinators who make it happen, Aboriginal learners are in excellent company for the journey.

The National Aboriginal Literacy Resource Directory

PROGRAM PROFILE
Consultants' Interview
(Questions Re-ordered to Reflect Sequence of Profile in Directory)

- *Section One: Listings – Program Geographics:*

1. Name of Program: _____
2. Mailing Address: _____
3. Telephone Number:( ) _____ Fax Number:( ) _____
4. e-mail address: _____
5. Name of Host Organization (if applicable): _____
6. Name of Program Coordinator: _____
7. What communities does the program serve or draw its learners from: _____

_____

- *Section Two:*

8. What are the goals or purposes of your literacy program? _____

_____

9. Aside from your role in this process, who else is responsible for developing policy and guidelines for your program? Do you have a Board of Directors or Committee to oversee and guide your work? _____
10. Length of Program Operation (Age of Program): _____
11. Currently, how many learners are in all components of the program? _____
12. Are these programs offered through:

    ❑ One-on-one tutoring: Small Classes: ❑ Both ❑

    Other (describe): _____

    _____

13 ◦ How do you assess learner capabilities and goals? _____

_____

14 ◦ Does your literacy program involve itself in any community activities? If so, what are they: _____

_____

- ***Section Three:***

15 ◦ What learning programs, courses, or activities does your literacy program provide to learners? For example, do you provide programs or instruction in :

❑ Basic literacy (level 1) ❑ Intermediate Literacy ❑ Life Skills
❑ Aboriginal Languages ❑ Family Literacy ❑ Upgrading Credits
❑ Other Credit courses ❑ Computer training ❑ Job Preparation
❑ Correspondence Courses
❑ Other (outline): _____

16 ◦ Number of Full-time Staff: _____ Number of Part-time staff: _____

17 ◦ Number of volunteers participating as tutors or assistants (at least two hours per week): _____
Where do volunteers/tutors come from: _____
What percentage are Aboriginal: _____

18 ◦ How frequently is the program offered (weekly, bi-weekly): _____
How many hours is each session(s): _____

19 ◦ Current constituency of learners served by program (approximate percentages) according to: _____
Cultural origins: Native:_____ Non-Native:_____
Age: (15 minus) (16 -24): (25-39): (40-55): (55 plus):
Male:_____ Female:_____
Average number of years of formal schooling: _____

20 ◦ Do you follow a specific "teaching or learning method" in your literacy program?
What curriculum(a) do you use: _____

_____

21 ◦ Would you say that your curriculum(a) is based on "Native values", that it specifically tries to use Native themes? How: _____

_____

22 ◦ Have elders or other respected peoples in the Aboriginal community been used in your program: _____

23 ◦ Expressed as an approximate percentage of your total operating budget, how much comes from:

Provincial Government:_____%

What Departments/programs: _____

Federal Government:_____%

What Departments/programs _____

Municipal Government:_____%

What Departments/programs _____ Foundations:_____%

Donations of Money:_____% Fees_____% Other:_____%

- ***Section Four:***

24 ◦ What motivates learners to enrol in your program? (economic reasons, high-school leaving, cultural enrichment, hobby-interest, specific short-term goal such as a driver's license, etc.): _____

_____

25 ◦ What do you feel they most like about the program? (confidentiality, curriculum and its cultural appropriateness, safe environment, quality of tutors, class size, personal and well-defined motivation ("I have to learn to read so I can help my son with his homework"): _____

_____

_____

26 ◦ Regular and ongoing participation by learners in a literacy program is one of the best guarantees that they will reach their learning objectives. There are factors that can help that and there are factors that can hinder that.

In the following list of items, would you rank from one to three the importance of these factors as they impact on your literacy program, where:

1 = Very important 2 = Somewhat important 3 = Not important.

We also ask you to indicate whether or not an item is currently a challenge or problem for your program.

Item	Rank	Challenge or Problem
Adequacy of funding		
Support & involvement of host organization		
Safe, welcoming environment		
Aboriginal tutors/volunteers		
Distance to program		
Transportation to program		
Day care for participants		
Native curriculum		
Offer courses in Aboriginal language(s)		
Recognition of learner achievement		
Offering other related programs (life skills, job-readiness, computer training)		
Learning aids, such as computers, etc.		
Other support services (counselling, homework assistance for kids, etc.)		

27 ◦ What are the major problems facing the program? (adequacy of curriculum, volunteers, financial resources, space, follow-up, drop-out rates, publicity, motivation (staff, learners), etc.) _____

_____

28 ◦ In the past two years, have you received project grants for specialized literacy program activities (buy curriculum, do a specialized study, etc.): _____

29 ◦ Some of your colleagues in other programs are working to improve curriculum, or working to improve the comprehensiveness of needs assessments or learner intake assessments. Have you been working on initiatives or improvements that you think might benefit the Aboriginal literacy movement as a whole? _____

30 ◦ Are you affiliated with any regional, provincial or national coalitions or networks?

_____

31 ◦ Are there other points of interest or information that you would like to mention about your program? _____

_____

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The Language of Literacy:
A National Resource Directory of Aboriginal Literacy Programs.

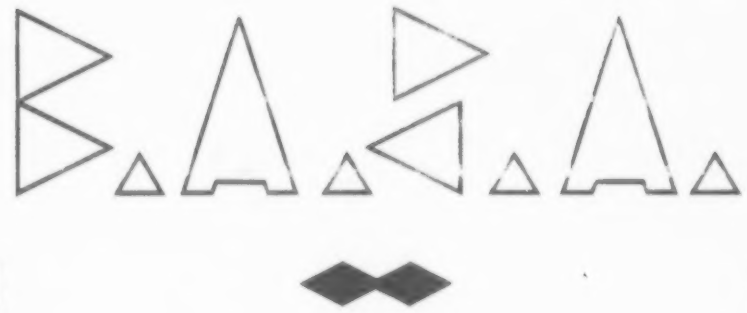
BASA and its Principal Partners

Beverly Anne Sabourin is a First Nations Ojibway from northwestern Ontario with extensive professional and volunteer experience in aboriginal communities and cross-cultural environments across Canada. She has worked as an educational counselor and consultant with two Canadian universities and a community college, as a programme designer and advocate for aboriginal family support services and recently completed a three year commitment as executive director of the Quebec Native Women's Association where she was very active in programmes promoting day care in aboriginal communities and in halting violence against women. Her professional experience has also included positions with the federal government (Secretary of State - Women and Aboriginal Programmes) and the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Her community volunteer work has been as committed as it has been varied, serving on numerous Boards including the Calgary, Thunder Bay and Montréal Indian Friendship Centres, the Ontario Native Women's Association and in initiating quality programmes in family support and social housing for aboriginal people.

Beverly has been consistently at the forefront of identifying and providing creative and practical solutions to the problems confronting aboriginal people in urban environments. She was nominated as "Woman of the Year" in Calgary, Alberta, holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology (Lakehead), a Bachelor of Social Work (McGill) and a Masters of Social Work from McGill University in Montréal. She is bilingual in English and Ojibway and understands French.

Peter André Globensky has worked in the field of development - both domestic and international - over a 25 year professional and volunteer career. He has had extensive experience at the most senior levels of the public sector garnering expertise in the fields of government liaison, management and strategic planning, organizational development and social advocacy. Until recently he was with the Montréal-based International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development as Director of Programmes. During his tenure at that institution, he organized an international mission of twelve Nobel Peace Laureates to free Burmese leader Aung Sang Suu Kyi and joined Archbishop Desmond Tutu in advising President Clinton on Burmese policy. Prior to that he served as the Chief of Staff to the Minister of External Relations and International Development (CIDA) and served as a policy advisor to the Prime Minister on Aboriginal Affairs. For fifteen years he worked for the federal department of the Secretary of State with responsibility for aboriginal and human rights programming. He has served on numerous community and foundation boards, enjoys an excellent reputation for resource identification and fund-raising and has extensive experience as a professional trainer and teacher. He has an MA in Political Science from McMaster University in Hamilton, is bilingual (French and English) and can communicate in Spanish. He is currently Director-General of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, Canada's premier forum for inter-jurisdictional discussion and action on the environment.

BEVERLY ANNE SABOURIN ASSOCIATES
consulting advocates



Beverly Anne Sabourin & Associates (BASA) is a First Nations consultancy committed to progressive social policy analysis, constructive social change, cross-cultural understanding, advocacy and government relations, organizational development, management and strategic planning. With nearly five decades of professional and community-oriented experience within an Aboriginal, international and Canadian mainstream milieu, the principals of BASA, lead by its president, Beverly Anne Sabourin, offer a depth of experience and commitment to the creative, dynamic and participatory process of programme design, advocacy, strategic planning and evaluation in the social sector.

It is a "value-based" consultancy which commits itself to the principles of personal empowerment and participation within our client milieu, believing as we do that civil society, whether it is within First Nations communities in Canada or within the international arena can only be enhanced by the active and informed participation of its citizenry.

Recent consultancies and advocate roles include an assessment of Aboriginal adult and child literacy initiatives in Canada, feasibility and assessment research on the delivery of early childhood learning and education programmes and proposals for the creation of an Aboriginal family services unit in Thunder Bay, an action-research project on the author of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a Transitions-to-Democracy blueprint for the Prime Minister of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, and for the third time in as many years, a three day workshop on organizational behaviour given to United Nations interns.

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